LOVE AND VALOUR

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VOL. II.

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BY

TOM HOOD.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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CHAPTER I.

MORE MARRYING.

I DO not doubt that my reader at once guessed to whom James Harding owed the small living spoken of by his brother in the last chapter. Mr. Golding, we know, had put a request delicately to the Bishop of Middleborough, and we know also that "J. Middleborough," if he had seen any probable advantage to himself, would have presented the fattest rectory in his diocese to Dr. Colenso's heretical Zulu. Luckily, at this time the bishop had no relations who

could benefit by his ecclesiastical patronage. His family, who were probably good judges of his capability, never looked for any great things from him, and so did not take orders in time to benefit by his advancement. He had a son, it is true, whom the bishop, who was one of the earliest to see his own chance of preferment, had sent to college, but the lad was only just about to take his bachelor's degree, after a very brilliant career at Oxford, during which he had taken several prizes for essays that his father had written for him—so his envious and unsuccessful rivals alleged; but I must, in candour to the bishop, state that I do not believe this—not so much because I should consider he was incapable of such questionable conduct as because I cannot think even his advantage in years could have enabled him to beat any smart young undergraduate

of ordinary talent. At any rate, the bishop at this time had no family claims to satisfy, so the first living that fell in was given to James. A florid letter signed "J. Middleborough," accompanied the official announcement of the nomination. His lordship had remarked the zeal and energy, etc., etc., admired and sympathised with the ardour and earnestness, etc., etc., was truly grateful that it was permitted him to mark even in so inadequate a manner his esteem of such labours and services, etc., etc., and so on to the end of an epistle which had little of the apostolic character, unless it were of the character of that particular apostle who bore the bag.

James Harding and his wife had no difficulty in guessing to whom they really owed the living. It was one of the charms of "J. Middleborough" that, whenever he did

any meritorious actions, people always looked for a personal motive.

"This is your uncle's work, Prue," said James.

"Yes, dear, I think it must be. What then?"

"Ah! that's just it, Prue. What then?"

"Will you—you won't refuse it, I mean?"

"What! a traitor in my own house, Prue? Treachery in my own bosom?"

And he drew her towards him and kissed her fondly. She nestled up close to him, with her head on his shoulder, and gave a quiet little sigh of happiness. Their lodgings in a humble part of Liverchester were the dearest and brightest spot in all the earth to them. You see, to make any place a home, there is only needed one very little thing—love; and it is a great pity—is it not?—that we can't order it in with

the new carpets, and chairs, and tables, because it is a very important piece of furniture. James Harding looked down into his wife's honest, frank grey eyes, which were saying as plainly as ever eyes spoke, "I love you!" There was no treason there.

"Shall I take it, wifie?"

"Why not, James?"

"You have heard me say I never would buy a living. This seems to me almost as bad."

"No, darling—that cannot be, surely. I know we neither of us respect the bishop except for his office' sake, but then don't you think, just as his personal character cannot prevent the efficacy of his episcopal functions, so this gift, for which you have taken no steps, does not suffer from his motives or intentions?"

"How she argues, this child-wife of mine!"

"I don't like to be called that, James. I know I am small and insignificant, but I am a woman and a wife, and have cast away childish things."

"Very well, Prue, we won't call you that offensive name any more. Shall we say 'old woman,' after the approved custom of the labouring classes of this civilised district?"

"James, you are wandering away from the subject. Will you accept this living?"

"I had far rather not. It seems almost like simony to me."

"Why, dear, you have taken no step to influence it. How do you know that it is not Providence that is holding forth this new duty, using the bishop's hands?"

"And these poor people among whom I have worked and prayed so long—to my labours on whose behalf I owe the noblest

prize man ever won—such a wife!—what courage can I find to leave them, Prue?"

"We must not doubt, James, that as good a servant may be sent into the vineyard here; or that, at any rate, your work, which is needed elsewhere, will leave its effects, and that the people will hold to what you have taught."

"I hope so, but I love my poor flock."

"Darling, we are too poor to give them the present help which they need as much as the spiritual aid. Perhaps the bishop may desire to fill your place with some well-to-do kinsman. If so, the poor may find in him what they so much need—some one with the power as well as the will to assist them."

"I think you could persuade me to anything, Prue."

So James accepted the living, which was

situated in the southernmost portion of the diocese, and was a thoroughly agricultural parish, and not a very large one. It was nearly all of it in the possession of one man, a wealthy country gentleman of the old school, known in the neighbourhood as "Squire Charlwood."

Squire Charlwood was a widower with two children—the elder, a son, was practising at the bar; the younger, a daughter, was at home keeping house for her father. The old gentleman was one of the rare specimens—and their rarity is a matter of congratulation—of that hard, stern class of men who believed the feudal system was the only safeguard of England, that protection was the sole bulwark of their class, and that the suffering of the lower orders was a mere necessity required to make the upper class's comfort the more certain.

When James arrived in the parish, he was not a little surprised to find that, although there were several large farms in the village, employing very many hands, but few labourers resided there, and that wages were miserably low. He found, on inquiry, that this was owing to the squire's objection to building poor cottages, for fear of burdening the parish with paupers, in the first place; and due, in the second, to his letting what poor cottages there were on the estate in a lump to the farmers, who sub-let to their workpeople, turning them out of house and home, or refusing them a roof at all unless they accepted the miserable pittance which the farmers thought fit to agree upon among themselves.

Of the ignorance and vice which prevailed among the small population of the village, I dare not trust myself to speak. Herded

and hutted like cattle, the wretched people led the life of beasts, while the farmers and their sons—those worst curses of country places—ruled like the ignorant and debased despots they were.

The late rector had been an easy-going, port-wine-loving sort of man, an ex-fellow, nominated by the last bishop, who had been at college with him.

You will acknowledge James had no easy work before him. He was not exchanging Liverchester for a sinecure. He toiled and slaved, and despaired almost; for there is in a town population, no matter how dark and poverty-stricken, a sort of elasticity which gives a response—shows some consciousness of your ministry—whereas in such an agricultural district as this there is no answer—no sign to prove that some, at least, of your labour is not thrown away.

Still, supported by his noble wife, whose womanly tact and instinct did more, I fancy, than James's experience and earnestness, he worked on. The result was that, though still received at the manor-house—because Squire Charlwood felt it a duty to acknowledge the Church—he was far from popular there, being looked upon as a dangerous and troublesome fellow—one of the new school of parsons, who couldn't be prevailed on to be quiet and mind their own business.

When James and his wife heard from Edward about Tom Martindale and Mary Freshfield and their difficulties, I am sorry to say they at once sided with those very headstrong young people.

"It's no use shaking your head and looking grave, James. I know your sympathies are with them, or, if not, ought to be, if only for the good example you set them."

"Yes; but, Prue, Martindale has a father who will be deeply grieved, I fear."

"I'm sorry for it, James, but it can't be helped, can it? and as Mr. Martindale, junior, I hope, marries for his own happiness, I think it is useless, after having settled that point, to waste time in thinking if it suits everybody."

"It's a good thing, young woman, that you have no children to learn doctrines so subversive of all parental authority."

"My dear, if I had twenty children, they should all marry at the dictates of their own hearts, not at mine!"

"Then you counsel an alliance with these scapegraces, in spite of poor Mr. Martindale's inevitable misery at his son's marriage?"

"Stop a moment. I suppose there will be nothing clandestine? He will tell his father?"

"Oh! yes. I quite understand that."

"Then write off to your brother Edward, whom I long to see, by the way, and tell him to ask Miss Freshfield down to stay with us, poor girl, and say we'll do all in our power."

"Your commands, Prue, must, and therefore shall, be obeyed."

Accordingly, in another week, Mary Freshfield came to stay with this good little couple; and when she had been with them a fortnight, Tom Martindale and Edward made their appearance, and took lodgings at a farm-house in the village.

Tom had told his father his intention, and the old gentleman was nearly broken-hearted—so nearly that I believe Tom, who really loved him, would have abandoned his plans if there had not been a risk of still more serious heart-breaking in so doing.

It was a brief pleasant time this, when James and his wife almost forgot, in the pleasure of watching what reminded them of their own love and marriage, the hopeless task they had to perform in their dead-alive parish. Edward made a very favourable impression on Prudence, who liked his quiet and reserved manner—due, it must be owned, chiefly to his sense of being much in debt, and out of luck generally. It was not long before Edward had confided to her his love story, though I am bound to admit that he made himself out to be more disappointed at the deception than he really was.

In due time the wedding-day of Tom Martindale and Mary Freshfield arrived. It was very quiet, but not quite so unpretending as that of James and Prudence. Tom would not be happy till he had got

down a case of champagne and a little cake, and he would have one carriage with two grey posters, and was altogether more demonstrative than James had been.

Yet I don't suppose he was less sincere. He certainly did not love his wife the less—if he did not love her the more—because her health was drunk in sparkling champagne; nor was his affection less worth having because he threw it into the form of a cake. Nor, finally, was he less delighted to make her his own because they rode home—about twenty yards at most—in a carriage and pair, instead of walking.

Tom and Mary went off to the Lakes for their honeymoon, and Edward stayed with his brother. He became a little given to melancholy, and was apt to sigh and ponder over his difficulties. He was getting very tired of the world, for his martial ardour was

dying out in the face of a humdrum garrison life, his regiment having been recalled to England, and about, so he heard, to be stationed in Ireland.

Prudence saw his melancholy, and was very anxious to drive it away. She asked James if there were any deeper-seated cause for it than his love affair, and her husband told her about his brother's debts.

"Why, James, dear, if that's all, isn't there our thousand pounds? Let's pay them off for him. We shan't be any poorer; we've plenty to live upon, haven't we?"

"You're the best little woman in the world!" said James, clasping her to his heart.

Having conceived this plan, Prudence lost no time in carrying it into effect. She made James to write to a lawyer whom he had employed at Oxford, and get him to collect

Edward's bills and send them to him. The lawyer obeyed, and I regret to say the list was a terribly long one, and the amount made a very, very large hole in the thousand pounds which James and Prudence had meant to lay by for a rainy day.

At last all was arranged satisfactorily, and one morning at breakfast James threw across the table to his brother the lawyer's letter inclosing a discharge in full of all Edward's debts. Edward could scarcely believe his eyes.

"Why—eh? What—all paid! By Jove! Jim, old boy, whose doing is this?"

James, who had broken the news in this off-hand way to spare his brother as much as possible, indicated Prudence with a jerk of the head.

Edward took her hand and raised it to his lips, and then—well, he was an officer

in Her Majesty's service, but then he was young, and had never seen service, besides, so I don't consider him the worse soldier for it—well, then he burst into tears, and his voice was so broken he could hardly sob out his thanks.

CHAPTER II.

BELLA CHARLWOOD.

JAMES HARDING'S new parish, the village of Bremning Minor, was a very lovely little place. Mr. Charlwood—"Squire Charlwood," as he delighted to be called—owned nearly the whole. And he took a great pride in it—though I am bound to admit that his pride did not extend beyond the trees, lanes, houses, and other inanimate objects therein, and was in no wise affected by the condition of the human inhabitants.

He had delightful plantations along the road-side, and little clumps of trees where

three or more ways met. The small stream which flowed through the village was spanned here and there by picturesque one-arch bridges. The gardens in front of the cottages bordering the high road were carefully kept, and plentifully stocked with flowers. The cottages themselves would have delighted the eye of an artist with their brown thatch, quaint windows, and a thousand other little details which look charming in a picture.

You could not possibly pass through Bremning Minor without being struck by the care bestowed on it to make it look a rustic Paradise—a very Eden.

But if you took up your abode for any time in Bremning Minor, you would have been rudely and rapidly undeceived. Behind the strips of plantation by the road-side were hovels hardly fit for human habitation.

The money spent on the arches over the brook, which was in real fact the village drain, should have been laid out in bricking it over, and defending its neighbours from the noxious exhalations which were always rising from it. The gardens in front of the cottages did not belong to them, and were tended, not by the tenants, but by the squire's gardener. And the charm which the cottages had for the artistic eye was due to the fact that repairs were neglected: they owed their beauty to decay. The variegated splotches of mildew, the rents and fissures of the walls, the layers of moss on the turf, the graceful irregularity of the roof-line, the small windows with quarrelled panes, the low ceilings and little doors, were all pleasant points in a picture, but ugly and baneful things in a dwelling.

When you found out this, and learnt how

delusive was the aspect of the village, it shook your faith in everything, and you almost began to suspect that the orchards of ruddy fruit in which the hamlet was embowered were only orchards of Dead Sea apples. And to some extent perhaps they were. For the produce of those apples was cider, and the worst and most injurious of that cider the farmers made their labourers take in part payment of wages—stuff that was literally intoxicating, for it was poisoning those wretched creatures who made beasts of themselves with it, and no wonder, for it was no more than Squire Charlwood and the farmers were ever studying to make them.

You may perhaps be inclined to marvel that this state of things was allowed to go on when there was a woman, and, what is more, a young woman, at the Manor House.

For I have told you that the squire was a widower with one daughter. But he never allowed her to interfere in any way with the management of his estate, or to see into the condition of the poor. There were certain charities which were expected of a lord of the manor, and these he paid—as he paid his taxes, and that was not always without a grumble. But these charities were the housekeeper's work. He sternly refused to let his daughter have anything to do with them.

"The poor people weren't fit for her to have anything to do with," he said. "She couldn't visit their houses without the chance of seeing or hearing something which she ought not. What were parsons paid for but to see after the lower classes? At any rate, he wouldn't have any of this new-fangled visiting nonsense in his house. She

shouldn't go about among the poor while he could prevent it—that was flat!"

He brought his daughter up to be a young lady, that perfection of ornamental uselessness. She had no knowledge of the world, or of the duties and cares of life. Accomplished she was most assuredly in all the arts that are unprofitable. If called on suddenly to do something for a living, she would have offered to make a bead-purse or a butterfly pen-wiper—at the very utmost a pair of Berlin wool slippers. If driven by unexpected necessity to provide something for her own dinner, I question whether she could have displayed a knowledge of any process more nearly approaching cookery than the manufacture of gum-water, or the solution of red sealing-wax in spirit-of-wine.

I think it likely that Bella Charlwood, in spite of these accomplishments of hers,

would have found her life rather a bore but for that universal benefactor, Literature. Unluckily there is literature and literature, and Bella's reading was not of a high class. The library of Bremning Manor had been stocked by contract. The squire never cared to read much, except a law book or newspaper. So he entrusted the choice of his library to the stationer at the nearest town, and that literary authority found he could make the best of the bargain by buying up a lot of third-rate three-volume novels of the Rose Matilda school. Such a collection of trash as that which filled the library bookshelves, I fancy, had never been seen before. On this pernicious rubbish Bella Charlwood fed until she lived in an ideal world of feverish impossibilities and diluted sentimentality.

The gipsies who encamped on the neigh-

bouring common at times were not slow in finding out this weak point in Bella's character—if I may speak of one point of her character as weak without giving it an invidious distinction—and the swarthy cheats made quite a little income out of her, supplying her in return with romantic visions of the future.

Bella had never given her father much trouble, and so they agreed pretty well, though in his inmost heart he considered all women a nuisance. But his daughter had never resisted his orders, and obeyed to the letter his directions about the non-visitation of the poor. Indeed, it was not expected that a young lady, who lived in a region of fiction among imaginary troubles, which always cleared off at the right moment, should take any great interest in the sad and solemn realities of life. She only knew of the

virtuous peasant as some one who lived in a cot covered with honeysuckles, whose daughter was pursued by a wicked peer, but who eventually died wealthy and beloved, blessing his noble and reformed son-in-law. There was no instance of this class in the village, but there was a good many low and ignorant people, and they she knew, from her experience of novels, were always utterly bad, and prepared to do any iniquity for money.

Of the real industrious poor she knew nothing, or at all events had not been taught by her reading to look for good qualities behind dirt, and misery, and squalor. So, while Jack Nokes's poor wife, with her baby at her breast, was on her knees before the squire in the justice-room, imploring, with bitter tears, mercy for that scapegrace, who had been caught snaring a hare (for which,

by the way, thanks to the fancy prices insured by the Game Laws, the poulterer in the next town would give him twice as much as he could earn in a day by honest labour)—while this poor woman, I say, was sobbing her heart out over her actual sorrow, Bella, who might have been interceding for the wretched wife, was crying her eyes out over the imaginary woes of Clementina, whose Alphonso was about to cross the seas in search of his great-grandfather's marriage certificate, in order to prove his title to a dukedom.

Imagine Bella's delight when she heard from a friend of her father's, who came over from Liverchester to dine with him, the history of the marriage of James and Prudence Harding—a history which, if not strictly accurate, was the more suited to Bella's taste by having been transmitted

from mouth to mouth, and rather gaining than losing in interest in the transit.

The squire was not influenced in the same way as Bella by the recital, nor did it make the Rev. James Harding more of a favourite with him.

"Serve him right to lose the money! A mere fortune-hunting poor curate, cuss him! he's too well off now, having got this living through it. A pretty parson indeed, with his persuading rich young girls to disregard the wishes of their lawful guardians! Bella, my dear, I request you will avoid those Hardings as much as possible in future."

This last command was all that was necessary to make the romantic Bella ridiculously in love with the Hardings. It made clandestine, and therefore doubly delicious to this novel-fed girl, the admiration she felt for a real couple so like the young people in a story!

She began to bore Prudence to death with her attentions; she was incessantly rushing in "for just five minutes" to see dear Mrs. Harding, and telling her what a "delightful book she was reading—oh, so lovely!—with a runaway couple in it, so nice, and such deserving people! She was sure Mrs. Harding would like to read it. She might have it, if she wished, to-morrow!"

Prudence was too kind-hearted, and, what is more, too wise to snub Bella, so she put up with the infliction. She felt that her husband's position would depend to a great extent on his relations with the squire—that it depended on Mr. Charlwood whether James's life was pleasant or miserable—and she was therefore as glad as only a woman can be of the opportunity of making a martyr of herself for the good of the man she loved. She bore Bella's gushing tender-

ness with the best possible grace, and took as much interest as she could feign in her sayings and doings, in the hope that friendly relations might thus be established with the Manor House people.

The arrival of Edward Harding was a great event to Bella. Of course there had always been an ideal king reigning in her heart, but she had never met with any young man who could by any stretch of imagination be considered as the embodiment of her essence of novel-hero. Her brother had sometimes talked of bringing friends down to stay the vacation with him, and had mentioned at different intervals different individuals as "his nearest and dearest friend," but somehow the visit had never been paid, and Bella was still obliged to content herself with an imaginary swain.

Now, however, her dream was to be real-

ized. A real soldier, who had been in a real war, was coming down, and she at once pictured to herself a Paladin of surpassing strength and manly beauty.

How far Edward Harding realised the picture I cannot tell. But I imagine a very bearded and brown young man, in not very new civilian attire, was not quite the same thing as the tall, well-shaven, pink-and-white-complexioned, red-coated, and plumed officer she had fancied to herself.

"And you were really in the Crimea, Mr. Harding?" said Bella. "You really went through all those perils and privations, and have come back unhurt, like Wallace in the *Scottish Chiefs?* Oh! how interesting!"

Edward was a little taken aback, and muttered something about having been in the Crimea. He was not quite certain

whether this highflown language were not intended for banter.

"And you have really seen a great fight?"

"Oh! several," said Edward, recovering himself, and feeling she was in earnest, but with a sly twinkle in his eye, as if he meant to revenge himself for his puzzlement.

"Do tell me which they were. The Alma, I suppose, and"——

"Oh, dear no, they were only Town and Gown rows at Oxford. I arrived in the Crimea too late to see active service."

"What a quiz you are, Mr. Harding! I declare if you didn't make me fancy you meant battles. But how disappointed you must have been! Weren't you fit to cry like Alexander the Great in *Sophronia the Priestess*, because there were no more worlds to fight about?"

Edward declared he was rather pleased

than otherwise, for he should probably have been terribly scared in a real battle.

"Ah! that's your artful courageousness! You know Sir Leofric pretended to Juliana in the *Knight of the Red Rose* that he was too frightened to go to the tournament, but he went on the sly, and conquered everybody."

"Did he indeed?" Edward asked, for he was not deeply read in novels, or, indeed, in any abstruse science.

But though Edward was not deeply read in novels, he was at this period considerably tinged with sentiment. The shipwreck of his affections, embarked on board the *Emily Prior*, bound for the United State of Matrimony, had made him gloomy, and prone to consider wounded vanity as blighted passion. While he was engaged to Emily he was for ever sighing to rid himself of the

burden. But when he found himself suddenly released, he shifted his position, and tried to persuade himself that he was wretched at the desertion. The fact was he liked to be a martyr—there is nothing that is so popular among us as martyrdom—and he made up his mind to consider himself ill-used in both cases. His frame of mind exactly fitted him to fall a victim to Bella Charlwood's romance. You may be sure she did not fail to make unobtrusive love to him. She used to ogle and sigh and talk sweet nonsense to him, and he encouraged her. You see, when a man has just had a love affair broken off, the position of the sexes is reversed, and it becomes a woman's task to woo him from his sad memories of the false one. And Edward submitted with remarkable grace to be courted from misogynistic reserve. Next to the pleasure of

being a martyr there is nothing in this world so tempting as being the donor of the fragments of a heart. There is something superlatively flattering to one's vanity in being able to say to a woman (or man) who adores you, "I can only offer you the ashes of a heart. You must not ask me for love!"

Edward had not escorted Bella in her walks half a dozen times ere she had heard and sighed over the sad story of his attachment. She looked upon herself in the light of a Rebecca tending a wounded Ivanhoe, or a Zeluca striving to restore a blighted Bernardo to a desire for life. I will not attempt to record any of the high-flown discourses which occurred between these two in their sentimental wanderings, because I regret to say that, having little leisure for reading, I devote none of it to the perusal of such stories as would assist me to the style which

Bella's studies had led her to adopt in all her conversations with Edward on such tender themes as his disappointed passion, or their purely Platonic friendship.

Of all the twaddle in life defend me from these Platonic affections! My dear Becky, when you undertake to play Rebecca to young Algernon, and in the most sisterly way bind up the wounds that the cruel Rowena has inflicted on him, be sure that it can only end in one way. He will recover to marry either you or Rowena, in which latter case your feelings towards the bride will be anything but sisterly. There is only one way in which a man who has misplaced his love can possibly be consoled. He must find some other woman who will not misuse his affections, and therefore Bessie, or Annie, or Laura, or whatever your dear name may be, rely upon it that, call it sisterly if you

please to begin with, the tenderness you bestow upon him must be very strongly flavoured with the pity which is nearest akin to love of other than a sisterly nature.

Prudence watched the growth of this affection with great pleasure. But Prudence with all her wisdom was a goose—unequivocally as great a goose in other people's love affairs as she had been in her own. Just as she had thrown away wealth for a poor curate in her own case, so she disregarded common sense in the case of others. She never doubted for a moment that Edward's heart was racked with the most acute pain by the faithlessness of Emily Prior, and, though she was startled at the suddenness of the cure, she was really delighted to find that Bella could cause him to forget his anguish.

I suppose when people who are inordi-

nately wealthy, and who dine off silver every day, are invited and condescend to go to the houses of meaner creatures, they do not dream of suspecting the spoons and forks of pewter; they never look to see if they are Hall-marked. Utterly unweeting of albata or nickel, they do not spend a moment in wondering which substitute for silver is being presented them. At least I hope they don't, and I imagine they don't; but never having been inordinately wealthy myself, I cannot speak from experience. I am, however, quite clear on one point—that Prudence never having known but one passion in her life, and that a thoroughly sterling one, did not dream of the possibility of such attachments as that springing up between Bella and Edward being rotted at the core—that, in fact, the spoons were not even albata, but only bismuth, fated to melt into nothing

at the first touch of hot water. So Prudence took infinite interest in this sham sentiment, and watched its growth as if it were of priceless value.

And in the meantime it grew and flourished. Bella really was in love. You will observe I don't say she loved—I only say she was in love—because there is all the difference in the world between the two things. To her this mild form of the universal disorder was exquisite anguish. She thoroughly enjoyed all the miseries of jealousy, of separation, of doubt, of fear, and of fondness. She was in love after the approved model, and could have quoted the precedent of some heroine or another in her favourate novels in defence of each particular act of affectionate folly of which she was guilty.

Edward did not deceive himself with the

notion that he really loved Bella. He was simply rewarding her for her kindness and tender interest. What else could he do? She evidently loved him, and he knew from bitter experience—so he argued with himself—what the pangs of an unrequited affection were. He would spare her all the pain he could. Life was of no further interest to him now. So why should he not devote it, offer it as a sacrifice to this poor girl who had formed an attachment for him? He told Bella all this when at length the time came for their declarations, as come it did, of course, before very long. But she was only the more charmed to find this additional mystery and complication. If there had been no obstacles and no eccentricities about their attachment, if her father had given his consent and Edward had been wealthy, I think she would, per-

haps, have turned up her nose at a match so opposed to the rules as made and provided in well-regulated novels for all instances of the tender passion.

Edward was very well satisfied with a tacit engagement. He did not burn to ask her father's consent to their union. He was content to go on in a desultory way as long as you like, and he therefore met Bella half-way when she began to entreat him not to destroy their happiness by divulging their love to papa. She wouldn't have cared two straws for any love that wasn't clandestine, and he only cared for it as a sort of occupation for his idleness, a distraction from his thoughts of the past and the cruel infidelity of woman. For, as I have already said, although as long as he was engaged to her he did not discover any regard for Emily Prior, no sooner was the engagement at an

end than he began to suffer all the pangs of a disappointed passion.

But these two young people were reckoning without James and Prudence. James had taken no heed of their gambols, but, as we know, Prudence had watched them with deep interest, and as soon as she knew that the couple had declared themselves and plighted their troth, she told her husband. Even the best women are match-makers at heart.

When James learnt this new flame of Edward's he was not over-delighted, and he was still more uncomfortable when he found that it was a clandestine one.

"My dear wifie," said James gravely, "I wouldn't for the world hurt Ted's feelings, but I really must talk to him seriously. This kind of thing is underhand and disingenuous. If he loves Miss Charlwood, he

must ask her hand of her father honestly like a man, not try to steal her heart clandestinely."

"This from the man who stole Prudence Heath's heart?" asked his wife, smiling fondly on him.

"That man, my love, hid nothing of his intentions or acts, nor did Prudence Heath, and I'm sure Prue Harding approves of her honesty and straightforwardness."

CHAPTER III.

DABBLING IN LITERATURE.

THE well-known "skeleton in the cupboard" theory, if it be true in the wider and more terrible sense in which it is generally spoken of, is undoubtedly true on a smaller scale. There is not one of us who has not some pet weakness or folly—not a whole skeleton, but a finger-bone, or perhaps even a tibia—concealed in a dark corner, only to be brought out when we are secure from observation. I have heard of an honest and upright man who would not have robbed his neighbour of a penny, but who could not resist the temptation of

making a false return of his income to the Inland Revenue. I have known a lady who would have turned out of the path to avoid treading on a worm, but who scarcely hesitated to destroy a dressmaker or two when she wanted a ball-dress at short notice. Nay, I have heard of a great and generous nobleman, who was a large contributor to charities, but who did not scruple to send a working man to gaol (and his family consequently to the workhouse—or worse), because he obeyed "the human instinct to kill," and shot a hare.

You will argue from this, I daresay, that I am going to expose the weakness of some of my good people, and that the weakness is a very awful one. Well, I will not attempt to disguise the fact. One of my good people does indulge in a secret failing, and a very heinous one.

"Who is the culprit?" you ask.

I tremble to confess it is Prudence Harding. You start and shudder. What will you do when you hear what the clandestine guilt is which I must declare proven against her?

Prudence Heath actually "wrote" on the sly—was an authoress in a small way! It was an unpardonable crime; but then what can one do? It is no use my attempting to conceal the fact, because her name is on the title-page of a little book for the young which I see advertised to-day.

I will tell you how it was that she became addicted to the terrible vice.

During the time when she was actively employed in trying to better the condition of the poor of Liverchester, she came in contact with Miss Brathwayte, who was one of those ladies that wear stick-up collars

and white waistcoats, and part their hair on one side. What she did besides this to better the condition of the labouring or indigent classes, I do not know, but she was supposed to have taken up those questions by the way as she was promoting the Rights of Woman, and much was expected of her; and certainly, if eccentricity of dress and an aptitude for doing everything unfeminine could have been of service to the cause, Miss Brathwayte would have been an invaluable ally.

She was no particular favourite with unobtrusive, active little Prudence, but she was much too shrewd not to see that that young person could be of infinite service to her, so she forced her friendship upon her. She prevailed on her to report on the condition of the poor of the district, and these reports, professedly "edited by Miss Brath-

wayte" (who got all the credit for whatever in them happened to be valuable), were forwarded to Head-Quarters, where they were highly spoken of. By "Head-Quarters" I mean a sort of society in London, composed of very manly young women and very old womanly men. Some of the latter were connected with journals or periodicals chiefly supported by female readers—publications which recommended themselves especially to Women who had Rights. One of these gentlemen was fairly shrewd, considering the class of minds he had been associated with for many years, and it occurred to him that the young lady who reported so ably under Miss Brathwayte's editorship might do something under his management.

Prudence was greatly surprised one day to receive a letter from this worthy, wherein he besought her to favour him with a few

articles on social subjects, for which he offered a price which seemed enormous to Prudence, but was in reality a rate of pay at which a fire-and-accident reporter would kick furiously. But it seemed to this inexperienced girl a marvellous sum—perhaps the more marvellous because she did not want it, in the first place, and because she would earn it by her own labour, in the second. I will point out what I mean by these two things. First, had she wanted it, the sum would have seemed smaller, because a very great amount of money in the lump looks less imposing when you have to tell off so much for bread, and so much for bed, and so much for clothing. Second, the fact of realising money by your own exertions is a pleasure of which the zest is not easily lost, but which, to a beginner, is a delight unsurpassable.

The wise editor had little difficulty in inducing Prudence to contribute to his periodical, but after a time the venture not proving remunerative it became necessary to strike out a new line. *The Domestic and Social Economist* lost its distinctive character, and when it appeared as *The Domestic and Social Economist, with which is incorporated the Monthly Treasure-house*, showed a tendency towards romances and light literature, which was quite inconsistent with the ideas of the white-waistcoated and side-partinged, middle-aged young ladies who had done so much to swamp it in its original form. But the editor of the rehabilitated magazine did not let all the staff go. Of course Miss Brathwayte and the stiffest-starched stick-ups and most provokingly clean white waistcoat seceded. A few of the writers, however, still stuck by the ship. They were not

so devoted to abstract principles and the visionary Rights of Women as to lose the pleasure of seeing themselves in print, very willingly.

Where is the author who has entirely outlived his enjoyment of proof-sheets? Why then should these poor girls, of various ages, ranging from twenty to forty and upwards, abandon the little amusement they derived from perusing their own harmless twaddle?

The cautious and appreciative editor was not a man to lose sight of Prudence. He suggested to her a little essay in the regions of fiction, and even went so far as to invite a contribution in verse.

I have unearthed a volume of the *D. & S. E.* of this period, and it appears to me that the following lines, signed P. H., must be our Prudence's:—

DREAMS.

By P—— H——.

The flowers that kiss the stream
  Are brightly reflected therein,
As the things we see in a dream,
  Which are not and never have been,
                Mine own,
  Which are not and never have been!

The stream glides away without a cease,
  And blossoms still bloom in the light;
Then night brings slumber and peace.
  And visions of pure delight,
                Mine own,
  And visions of pure delight.

I sit beside the wave,
  Where the river goes dancing ever along—
From the cradle it doth to the grave,
  With always the same song,
                Mine own,
  With always the same song.

The cautious and appreciative editor no doubt saw that verse was not Prudence's forte. She was faulty in her rhymes—witness the second and fourth lines of the two first stanzas—and she was confused in her images, and she hobbled and hopped pain-

fully in her rhythm. So he did not urge her to write any more poetry. But he was so satisfied with a short story she wrote for him, that he engaged her to write a novel for him at the rate of about five thousand words for two-and-sixpence. It is true that on learning from the publisher soon afterwords that an emissary of a rival publication had been trying to learn the name and address of the author of *Ruth's Reckoning*, he raised that munificent remuneration to four shillings a page. But then he entrapped Prudence into a promise not to write for any other periodical while *Ruth's Reckoning* was running.

How that story affected the sale of the periodical, or what the public thought of it, we shall never know. For in a frantic desire to bring its expenditure within bounds, the proprietors began to cut down the out-

lay so vigorously that they brought down the magazine itself with a run. While it was being done as well as it possibly could for the money, with fair type and not utterly execrable engravings, the *D. & S. E.* had barely kept its head above water. When it was printed for a song on bad paper, and the illustrations came to an end, it was only natural that the circulation should not increase.

Towards the end of the time Prudence did not receive her paltry pittance with any regularity. Small as it was she had counted on it with pardonable pride, and she wrote, therefore, to ask for it. The crafty editor candidly told her of the declining fortunes of the periodical, and implied delicately that its approaching untimely end was chiefly due to his unhappy error in employing her. The result was that she was so conscience-smitten

that she was half-prepared to disgorge all her little gains, and was indeed haunted for a considerable period by a ghost of the paper, attired, I suppose in a proof-sheet, and wringing its hands while it accused her of murdering it.

Who would have suspected that very quiet and grave Prudence Heath of such a career of literary vice? Little did James Harding, when he made her his wife, suppose that her soul was burdened with remorse for the great crime of bringing *The Domestic and Social Economist, with which is incorporated the Monthly Treasure-house*, to its untimely grave.

Prudence kept this skeleton so closely locked away in its dark corner that no one ever dreamt of its existence. When she married she had no intention of ever taking up the pen again. Her experience of literature had been far from encouraging, and

nothing but dire necessity would have induced her to indulge in the delicious impropriety again.

Not very long after the payment of Edward's debts Prudence began to have a fresh object for her cares and anxieties, her savings and earnings. She was about to become a mother. There was a strange awe and delight in the thought, and like the parent-bird devising a nest for her coming brood, Prudence began to plot and scheme for her child. She did not grudge the money which she and her husband had given to release poor Ted from his weary slavery, but she felt a necessity for devising some means to replace the amount by which baby's fortune, that should have been, was diminished. She instinctively thought of her old literary efforts, and having obtained somehow or another a little more knowledge

of the world of letters, she fancied that she might turn an honest penny by writing.

It is astonishing to think that people who read, and should be able to appreciate, the improved literature of modern times, will insist on believing that to earn a livelihood by the pen is one of the simplest things possible. Instead of seeing, in the number of widely-circulated publications in which this age abounds, an evidence of the quantity of skilled labour (not to say so much as experienced talent) that there is in the field, they begin to dream of an easily-acquired income, and pester editors, whose duties in these days of penny postage are no sinecure, with endless batches of inferior writing, mere twaddle, that they themselves would be the first to condemn and complain of if it appeared—always supposing that it was the contribution of some one else.

Prudence now betook herself to her little room whenever James was engaged on his sermons, and very often when he was not. He did not take much notice of her absence, for he supposed she had household duties to attend to.

Little did he imagine that she was seated —at the time when he fondly imagined her to be counting out the clothes—in her quiet room, with pen, ink, and paper, engaged on her novel.

Yes: Prudence was writing a novel. And really, when one reflects on the majority of those three-voluminous stories which it fell to her lot to peruse, as a member of the local reading society, one can hardly wonder that she should hope to emulate those remarkable works of fiction.

By the time that Edward was called upon to promise that he would undertake the re-

sponsibility of being godfather to Jim's first little girl, the second volume of *Cyril Markham, or Gold and Goodness*, was half finished. But the appearance on the scene of Ted's godchild, a small but very lively young lady, with a voice of her own, and early indications of a front tooth, dissipated for a time all Prudence's literary visions. Cyril Markham, who at the two hundredth page of Vol. II. was on the point of committing a forgery, in order to rescue his lady-love's disreputable father, a city speculator, from bankruptcy, was left hovering on the brink of that crime for a considerable period.

The manuscript was locked away in a drawer until Prudence was well enough, and Miss Prue the Second—so baby was christened—had attained an age when she might be entrusted to a great extent to Martha Ogleby, the young and rather raw

nurse whom Prudence the elder selected for the guardian of her first-born.

Martha Ogleby was a round-faced, innocent country girl, whose normal state was wonder and bewilderment. But she was so content to wonder, without attempting to allay that state of mind, that Prudence did not scruple to resume her pen and take up the thread of her story again, though nurse and baby were in the room pretty constantly. There was no possibility of Martha's guessing what her mistress was employed upon. Martha was the only daughter of a lone laundress, and owing to early training, her mind never soared above the mangle and the wash-tub. When she saw Prudence writing page after page of manuscript, all that it suggested to her was that missus had a powerful deal of washing to put down, and the only intellectual effort

it cost her was the attempt to calculate roughly what the mangling would amount to at three-halfpence a dozen.

As for baby, she displayed an early taste for literature, for whenever mamma chanced to take her on her lap while engaged in composition, the young lady would immediately commence to devour her mother's story with absorbing interest—tucking it into her pink gums with a random avidity very like that of the sea-anemone.

Despite all drawbacks, however, Prudence persisted, and before very long had finished a considerable portion of her story. Whether the quality was at all commensurate with the quantity it is impossible for me to say.

The story had now so nearly approached a conclusion, that Prudence began to wonder what publisher she had better apply to. First of all she very naturally selected

Reardoss and Faldstool, the publishers of the religious books which James distributed as prizes in his school. They—as naturally—declined the offer. Then she wrote to Puffham Brothers, whose name appeared on the title-page of the *Dropped Stitch*, the last novel which had fallen in her way. But Puffham Brothers were not speculative men—they never dreamt of exploiting an unknown writer. They waited until an author had made a success, and then gave an absurd sum for a work "to follow" from the same pen,—and I am glad to believe lost generally, as they deserved for cropping a field that had only just borne. So Puffham Brothers declined Prudence's offer, and she had to try Spink and Nipper. Spink was her correspondent, and was most affable—so affable that he even took her into his confidence, and told her that he,

personally, thought very highly of the novel, but unfortunately his partner, who, he implied, was no judge, thought otherwise; but he could contrive, he thought, to induce him to let the firm publish it on terms which meant, in so many words, nothing at all! From Spink and Nipper, Prudence turned her attention to Mr. Pownceby, the great publisher of everything that could be desirable in the way of literature for ladies. Mr. Pownceby suggested that Mrs. Harding should call upon him. He always liked to see people, because he could talk exalted humbug as well as any man living, and trusted besides in the effect of his personal appearance, which was venerable. I may add that his humbug and his appearance constituted the only capital he possessed.

Prue was of course taken in by the fellow. He had deceived far more experienced peo-

ple than Prue. So she worked away with a will on her story, which, he hinted, would appear in the pages of *Woman's Home.*

Oh! James Harding, to think that the gentle, innocent, sweet little woman whom you fold to your confiding breast, is in reality that awful thing a female novelist! Well! that crafty woman continues her work, and though she sheds ink, actually abstains from shedding blood—though some people would hardly believe that of a literary lady—and is busily engaged in constructing a plot to enable her to run up to London.

CHAPTER IV.

THREEPENN'ORTH OF BRONZE.

"WHY, Jim, you look quite fagged out," said Edward, who was smoking a pipe in the library when James arrived from his visiting duties.

"I am very tired," said the parson. "The parish is scattered, and there are many sick."

"Yet they talk about the country being the place for health."

"My dear Ted, if it were not these people would die off round us—fall like soldiers in battle, to use a figure which you ought to understand."

"How is it, Jim?"

"Because they are so badly housed and so miserably paid. I have poor parishioners who do not know what it is to see meat oftener than about four times a year, and then it is greasy pork. They themselves are worse styed than the pigs that supply that pork, and *they* are generally diseased, or the meat would not come within reach of these poor wretches. The houses have no draining and no ventilation, or only such wholesome ventilation as may be procured by opening a window or a door, and letting in the exhalations of heaps of decaying animal and vegetable matter."

"But who's to blame for all this?"

"The squire."

"What an old brute he must be!"

"He is hard and brutal, Ted, and that makes me more concerned on your account."

"On my account?"

"Yes, Ted, because I know the sort of reception he will give you when you go to ask his daughter's hand."

Poor James Harding had had considerable difficulty in trying to find the most delicate way of speaking to his brother on the subject of Bella, which he discussed, as we already know, with his wife. He did not want to offend Edward or hurt his feelings, the more especially as he, James, had paid off Edward's debts, and did not wish to be suspected for an instant of taking advantage of the obligation to dictate to his brother or interfere with his freedom of action in any way. He had been worrying his brains sadly to devise some expedient, and after all he found this chance conversation the easiest way of doing it.

Edward was a little taken aback at the notion of his brother's taking an interest in

an attachment of which he himself could hardly be said to be conscious.

"But I'm not exactly—at least, not just yet—in fact, I am hardly prepared to take that step."

"But you and Bella are engaged, are you not?"

"Well, yes, something of the sort."

"Surely you don't intend to keep it a secret from her father?"

"Why, you see it is Bella's special wish, and what's a fellow to do under the circumstances?"

"There is only one honourable course, is there, Ted?"

"Well, if you put it in that way, I suppose there is—but then all things are fair in love and war."

"I don't think you mean that seriously, Ted, do you?"

"Perhaps not; but I have never seriously

considered the question in that light."

"I suppose there is no doubt of your attachment?"

"Oh! dear, no. Poor girl, I believe she is very fond of me!"

"And you, Ted?"

"Well, you see, James, after a disappointment like mine, a man has very little of what is called sentiment to bestow. But I know too well what one suffers in the bestowal of an unrequited attachment, and I will give in return for her affection all that a man can give whose heart has been early blighted."

All this was very pretty talking. But I think we know how very little Edward is to be depended on in these matters. Love is one of the most extraordinary diseases that we mortals are subject to. It is well called an affection. It is very like gout and rheu-

matism; it flies about us, and touches the head, or the heart, or the liver, at times, just at its own sweet will. When it affects the head it is dangerous. For a man who loves with his head loves very strongly. This form of the disorder attacks us late in life. When it attacks the heart it is generally communicated through the eye. It is violent then, but the paroxysms do not endure. When it attacks the liver it is simply another form of bile. It jaundices the eye, and makes one irritable and full of fancies. It produces languor and dreaminess.

Now I think Edward's love had flown to his liver. Let us examine the symptoms. First of all, he had fallen in love with Emily Prior because it was so convenient for Damon and Pythias to become attached to a Hermia and Helena, "both on one sampler, sitting on one cushion."

This was languor and dreaminess. Then he continued to cling to the engagement with Emily from a morbid desire to be an honourable martyr. Mere bile that! And then when he found out his mistake with regard to Emily, he immediately turned round, persuaded himself he had loved her, and elected to suffer the pangs of disappointed love. Clearly aggravated bile. And now when Bella rather threw herself at his head, he accepted what he at once concluded was a deep and heartfelt passion, and returned it by the offer of what he believed was a broken heart. Only jaundice after all, bilious fancies, and tinged views!

The fact is, Edward was very susceptible. Some people catch cold at the ghost of a draught, by losing a button off their shirt-collars, or by substituting a narrow watch-ribbon for a broad one. Just in this way

some young men fall over head and ears into the tender passion—so tender, indeed, as to be almost soft—at the mere waft of a petticoat, the sight of a fluttering tress, the glance of an eye. Most young men, I may say, take the disorder early in this form, which fortunately does not prevent them from catching it again later in life, when it flies to the head.

James, I daresay, did not know much about the diagnosis of the passion, but it is probable he thought the blighted heart of which Edward spoke was merely a little affected by a green insect which, as every owner of geraniums knows, can be extirpated by smoking.

"Well, Ted, I think you will see, on reflection, that the right course to take is to go and speak out honestly to Squire Charlwood."

"Humph! I suppose you're right."

"I'm sure I am, and so are you."

"Very well, I'll do it."

"That's right, Ted. Thank you," and James shook his brother's hand warmly.

"Why thank me, Jim?"

"Because I was really in a most difficult position."

"Well, upon my word, Jim, I'm very sorry if it was owing to me, but I don't see how."

"I've got odd notions of duty, perhaps, but you know, Ted, if you had not offered to go, I'm afraid it would have been my most painful task to do so myself. I cannot, in my position to the squire as one of my parishioners—indeed, in the mere abstract position of a clergyman—see anything of this kind carried on in a clandestine way, especially by any of my own family. Mine's

not a pleasant position, Ted, and with a man to deal with like Charlwood, all its difficulties force themselves upon you. I know I am no favourite of his, for as I feel compelled to deal strictly and justly towards him, I must deal strictly and justly towards others, and this has brought us in contact more than once in matters that concern the parish and his tenants."

"By Jove! that's true, Jim. Well, I always thought you parsons led such jolly easy lives."

"A great many people think so."

"And a great many parsons do so, eh, Jim?"

"There are black sheep in every profession—your soldier is not always a hero!"

"No, by Jove! he isn't, Jim. There were some brutes in my regiment. One of our fellows told me that the captain of one

company, while leading his men, was shot in the back by one of them who owed him a grudge. Think of that—and in battle too!"

"I'm hardly surprised. While I was at Liverchester I found that no respectable men would enlist—the pay was so small, and the life so hard. It was only the born vagabonds and ruffians, whom nothing could civilise, that enlisted, and they only when they were practically outlawed and had no other refuge."

"But there are brave fellows among them."

"Yes, and that makes it the harder to understand. Considering the material, it is wonderful what soldiers ours are!"

"Why don't you teach 'em better?"

"We—meaning the parsons—can't get at them. I'll tell you a story in point.

There was a young lad in my parish who was the terror of the neighbourhood. He was just at 'hobbledhoy' age when I got the curacy, and the very scourge of the school. Not that he belonged to it, but he was always tormenting either the master or the scholars. When I came I took him in hand. He was a mere unlicked cub——"

"So you licked him!"

"Yes, in one sense. He had been more than ordinarily troublesome to the schoolmaster, a mild, inoffensive man, one day, so I went down, took my gentleman by the collar, and lugged him bodily into the playground. 'Look here, my fine fellow,' I said, 'I can't have our work hindered by you. Either come into the school or go away.' 'Who's to make me?' said he. 'I will,' I said quietly. There happened to be a beam lying in the yard—the schoolhouse

was only just built, and the materials were still about—so I said to him, 'This bit of wood is about six times your weight. I don't want to hurt you, but I'll just show you what I'll do to you.' You remember I and Homfray spent one 'Long' up in the North, where I had practised all the Scotch games, putting the stone and throwing the caber. I wasn't quite sure that my muscle wasn't a little flabby in spite of tubs and dumb-bells, but I determined to try it. So I took up the beam—it was an end sawn off, about my own height—and balancing it a bit on my hands, pitched it across the yard. It was not a very large yard, and it was not a very big throw, but it was quite enough. The lad didn't say a word, but he went up to the balk and 'hefted' it, and found there was no trick, and then he slunk out of the yard like a beaten dog. But I had taken a

respect to him, because, from all I could learn, he was no bully. The little boys and girls idolised him. 'Stop a bit,' said I. He came back like a lamb. 'If you'll come to school regularly, I'll teach you how to do that, and lots of other things, after hours.' It was a forlorn hope, but to my surprise he jumped at it. In order to keep my promise, I had to have him at my lodgings in the morning, when I was getting up, because I always allowed myself three-quarters of an hour at the dumb-bells, and that was the only time I could spare for him. Well, he got on well at school, and was learning his club-exercise of a morning at my lodgings in style, when one day there was a great commotion at the door of the schoolhouse, and in came his mother, a wild Irishwoman —we have lots of Irish in Liverchester— and a pretty to-do she made, declaring we

were ruining her boy, making a black Protestant of him, and what not, and then for the first time I learnt he was a Romanist, for he had dropped religion for gymnastics. So I lost my pupil."

"Then the fact is, you want schools where all religions may go——"

"Secular education, Ted! It's an awful thing to talk to a parson about, and so it should be. But the longer I'm at it the more I'm convinced that that's the only remedy for the ignorance and helplessness we see around us—not so much in villages, though why I hardly know. Of course the principle ought to apply to them as well as large towns."

"Isn't it because you parsons, or the squires, are such little kings that the people all sacrifice their prejudices and partialities to the shrine of the powers that be?"

"It's only too likely, and if so, the independence of the poor, which is the only thing that keeps them above the level of the brutes, suffers; and I'd rather, I'm afraid, have secular education for them, though I'm obliged to own it reluctantly."

"What was the end of your *protégé*, by the way, Jim?"

"He fell from bad to worse. The little training I had been able to give him was no use, or worse than none. He became, as he grew up, a drunkard, a thief, and a ruffian. He was sent to prison several times, and at last disappeared from sight altogether. But just as I was leaving Liverchester he turned up again. He had enlisted into the Line, and had served gallantly. He had gone through the Crimean campaign, and was a corporal. The little reading and writing he had picked up at school stood him in good

stead. He had worked hard at it, and so his gallantry brought him promotion, which was not, as is too often the case, hindered by his ignorance. He had the Crimean medal, and he had more than that—the Victoria Cross!"

"By Jove!"—a sigh.

"Yes, that little threepenn'orth of bronze for which brave men are ready to risk life and limb at every opportunity. Oh, Ted, that's the one thing I envy you soldiers."

"It's a grand thing, Jim! All the other crosses and stars may be got in all sorts of ways. They make men knights, and baronets, and lords, and that kind of thing for the most absurd reasons. But there's only one way of winning the threepenn'orth of bronze, as you call it."

"I think the inscription is so simple and so fine—'For Valour.' It beats all the old

Roman inscriptions for brevity and meaning. I'd give anything I possess to win it."

"You possess, Jim, the only thing that could win it. Don't I remember your cutting in through a crowd of cads in Brasenose-lane, and bringing off Charley Day of New? It's a pity you parsons haven't a chance of something of the sort."

"Well, I don't know, Ted; I'd give anything for a Victoria Cross, as I said just now, but it isn't a decoration for the clergy."

"Why not, Jim? From what your wife has said, I am sure a fellow who has faced that awful cholera as you did at Liverchester is as plucky as any man who rode in the Light Brigade."

"It's our duty, Ted. There are certain things we are all of us called on to do in

the line of our work. A parson might, perhaps, deserve praise for galloping up to a battery—it's not his work. But to do some special deed of daring for which you distinguish yourself among men who ride up to batteries as mere everyday business is something."

"Here's another way of looking at it, Jim. A soldier has a set of routine work—chiefly tending to the destruction of his fellow-creatures—which would be plucky work for any one not in the profession. A parson, as you say, might get mentioned with credit for charging a battery and cutting down a few gunners. But a parson's line of business, like an army-surgeon's, very often takes him where death and its horrors are just as close and thick as in the Light Brigade valley, only in a different form. In the case of parson and surgeon the risk is run for the

benefit of his fellow-man. And that's a nobler form of courage—in fact, if you notice, the men who get the Victoria Cross in the Army and Navy generally get it for just the kind of work which you fellows are called on to perform as a matter of routine."

"What do you mean, Ted?"

"Why, I mean that the decoration is most often conferred on men who go out under fire to fetch in the wounded, or who rescue prisoners, or something of that sort."

"Should not you like to have the Victoria Cross, Ted?"

"I *will* have it whenever I get a chance, and that I've made up my mind to."

"It's not everybody who gets the chance, Ted, or the value of it would be lessened."

"That's true, and when the time comes for earning it, I hope I shall be thinking less

of the threepenn'orth than of my duty."

"Well, I'll tell you what, you'll deserve a Victoria Cross almost if you face Charlwood."

"Oh, I'm not afraid of him. Here goes. Have an ambulance ready for the wounded, Jim."

So saying, Edward put on his hat and marched off towards the Manor-house.

James Harding sat down to begin his sermon. But he was obliged to lay down the pen before long. He could not bring his mind to his work. And no wonder.

He felt that Edward's visit to the Manor-house was but the beginning of a desperate war between himself and the squire; and he estimated the extent of that war, and how unpityingly it would be carried on. He felt certain that the squire would not listen to Edward. But he was not distressed about

that, for if the young people really loved each other they had time to wait yet, and only needed patience, and then their love would come all the brighter out of the trial.

It was not for them that he feared, but for himself and the interests of the poor people who were to so great an extent dependent on him and on his relations with "the great house." For whatever charities were doled out by Mr. Charlwood were administered by him, and any suspension of relations between him and the squire would intercept even that pittance, and then he would have to do what he could out of his own small means. But James Harding did not complain. He accepted his position without a murmur.

If ever a man deserved the Victoria Cross it was this quiet, undemonstrative parson, whose eyes glittered and whose voice height-

ened as he spoke of the "threepenn'orth of bronze" just now. He had been "as one in suffering all, that suffers nothing."

From the time when he fought, hand to hand and foot to foot, that fierce battle with cholera in the back streets and alleys of big Liverchester, to this period when he was combating ignorance, and poverty, and disease in outlying detachments scattered up and down his parish, he had never ceased to wear a courageous heart and a cheerful front, though the odds were very heavy against him, and victory was practically hopeless.

Now he saw an additional ally about to be joined to the already far superior number of his opponents. But he did not flinch nor fear. He even, as we see, hastened on the cause of the alliance. He might have chosen to wink at the engagement between Edward

and Bella, but he was too plucky for that. He had right on his side, and that was the side to fight on; what did it matter to him if he fell in the ranks, a poor unnoticed private, striking his strongest and behaving his bravest? It was better to fall so, he was sure, than to be on the other side and advance, as the right was temporarily defeated. For there would come a time, he knew, when the falsely-won laurels would be stripped from the brow of ill-doers, to be heaped on the graves of those who died for the right. Better late laurels than lost laurels —better consciousness that whatever became of himself the cause must triumph, than any present success, to be followed by certain failure.

CHAPTER V.

FORBIDDEN TO UNITE—ORDERED TO REJOIN.

AS Edward Harding marched up to the Manor-house for his interview with Squire Charlwood, he felt very like a soldier leading a forlorn hope into the imminent deadly breach. Under such circumstances even a brave man and a veteran may be excused a wish that every mile were twice as long as it is. The Manor-house was so near the parsonage, however, that even that could not have given Edward very much time for reflection.

He was quite prepared for a hot recep-

tion. He did not for a moment suppose that the old gentleman would listen to his suit. But he was in a little doubt as to how they should get through their interview. It was not how they would meet, but how they would part that puzzled him. "I only hope I shall keep my temper with the old brute," said Edward to himself, which you will own was hardly the sort of sentiment a man should entertain towards one whom he is about to ask to become his father-in-law.

When Edward reached the gate of the Manor-house he paused for a few moments. He had made up his mind what to say, and had, in fact, got a very pretty speech prepared. While he is standing at the gate reciting some very telling point about "service of his country"—"the highest honours to be obtained by a conscientious performance of duty"—"position and wealth within

the reach of the humblest subaltern"—he becomes aware of the fluttering of a bright fresh morning dress among the shrubs and flower-beds on the lawn. It is his Bella. He had almost entirely forgotten her existence in the nervous anxiety he felt about the right way in which he should ask to be permitted to unite it with his!

It occurs to him that, as she had so specially entreated him to conceal their engagement, and he is now about to divulge it, it would be as well to consult her on the subject.

How charming she looked! How artlessly she caressed the flowers, her fingers twinkling delightfully among the green leaves, the red roses with their reflected glow heightening the bloom on her cheeks and lips, as she drew them towards her to enjoy their musky perfume. She had on a dainty little hat with cherry ribbons—just

such a hat as a stage shepherdess wears. Her dress was a pure white muslin, sprinkled with tiny rosebuds, and she had a natty little apron that was merely an ornament, for it was too small to be useful. There never was a prettier sight than this artful beauty among the flowers. And then she was so unconscious of it, too! For of course she had not seen Edward coming from the parsonage! It is one of the delights of a small village that everybody overlooks everybody else. You had a capital view of the parsonage lawn from the upper windows of the Manor-house, and Bella, chancing to look out of the window of the housekeeper's room, spied her Edward sauntering across the grass; and guessing whither his steps would instinctively tend, had ample time to slip on the muslin gown, tie on the jaunty apron, pop the little hat on her head, and

be apparently absorbed in the flowers long before Edward appeared at the gate. It was so artless, was it not?

Edward opened the gate noiselessly and stole across the grass towards her. In her agitation, and from a strong desire to affect ignorance of his approach, she plunged wildly into admiration of a glorious staff of white lilies, those queen-flowers of the garden. But, like all queens, they should be admired at a distance. Bella sniffed at them with such close rapture that the tip of her saucy nose was covered with the golden dust of the flower, and even the loveliest of women is not improved by having a yellow nose.

Edward crept up to her. "Bella, darling!"

"Oh! Edward, is it you? How you frightened me!"

"Yes, I am here, Bella *mia*. There is no one looking—so!"

Here there occurred a little passage of arms, Bella defending herself with a very slight show of resistance, and the frailest of parasol handles. The result was that a certain yellow smudge, attributable to the pollen of the white lily, or *L. Candidum*, was common at once to Edward's cheek and Bella's nose. They both appeared so much better for the transfer that I am induced to believe that the medical qualities of this lily are not confined to the roots, which are "frequently employed," so say the learned, "as emollient poultices, owing to the mucilaginous matter which they contain." The application of the pollen to Edward's cheek had the immediate effect of making it a happy rose colour, while his eyes sparkled with a joy not altogether to be expected of a young gentleman who had only the wreck of a heart to bestow.

"What are you doing up here, Edward?" asks Bella, adjusting her hat, which has somehow got knocked off its perch. "Not come to see me, I am sure."

"Right as usual!"

"Well," says the beauty, pouting, "it is not pretty to say so. But you are such a bear!"

Described as a bear by a lady, whom to contradict is to be unpolite, what can poor Edward do but "behave as sich?"—and as his knowledge of Natural History is limited, he can only hug, which he knows is the habit of the genus *Ursa*. When he has thus proved himself a bear with great satisfaction to himself, a transfer of more yellow dust to his cheek was observable with the naked eye.

"I'll box your ears, sir, if you don't behave better."

"If you will walk with bears you must excuse their affectionate manners!"

"Go along, you silly boy! And now tell me what brings you here? I do not know what papa would think if he saw you."

"My dear Bella, I have come here for the especial purpose of saving him the trouble of thinking. I have come to tell him everything."

Thereupon Bella gave a little squeak.

"Oh! Edward, he won't hear of it. He will part us—he will tear us from each other, and leave us but the relics of our broken hearts to brood over alone and in silence."

(I think I ought to mark those words as a quotation of Bella's. I remember that bit about "brooding over the relics of a broken heart" in that delightful romance *Adelina, or the Baron's Daughter*, and I know "alone

and in silence" occurs in the high-spiced class of novel, *passim.*)

"My dearest Bella, I cannot consistently with honour conceal our attachment from him."

"Why will you sacrifice our happiness to a mistaken sense of honour, Edward? Surely in love and war all is fair?"

"Well, no—not exactly. At least, there are circumstances which govern—that—in short, you can hardly understand the ties which—the reasons that induce me to take this step—as an officer and a gentleman—but you must take it for granted they are very strong."

"In short" and "in fact" to quote Edward's own words—I think he was much of Bella's opinion with regard to the fairness of stratagem in love and war. But his brother's position in the matter left him no

alternative, and yet he did not like to confess to Bella that the step he took was not entirely at the promptings of his own conscience.

Bella did not quite see what answer to make to this rather rambling address of Edward's, so she betook herself to the usual refuge of women—tears.

"It's very—hufsh!—very hard—hufsh! —that one's brightest hopes—hufsh!—are to be dashed—hufsh!—in the midst of all our—hufsh, hufsh!—happiness."

Of course when Bella began to cry there were more discursions into Natural History and Botany, and—more transfers of pollen, in fact.

"Come, come, Bella! You must not give way like this. We do not fear separation."

"Oh, yes!—hufsh!—but then it's so hard to lose—hufsh!—those we love—hufsh!"

More essays in Natural History and Botany! And then came a footstep approaching on the gravel walk. They looked up, and lo and behold! there was the squire coming towards them with a red face indicative of terrible rage.

"By Jove! he's seen us!" was Edward's inward reflection, and he felt very uncomfortable.

"Law, how like the beginning of *Rank and Riches, or the Heir of Cloverleigh*—how curious!" thought Bella, who did not feel at all frightened, for if she had any active virtue, it was courage.

I think, on mature consideration, we will adopt the Parliamentary practice, and take Mr. Charlwood's address to Edward "as read." It would hardly bear setting down, for though the language was quite strong enough to run alone, I'm afraid it dealt too

freely with torrid adjectives, references to Pandemonium, and invocations to the presiding genius of that locality, to admit of its being set down without such modifications as would entirely destroy its originality.

This was Bella's opportunity. She flung her arms round Edward, and plainly evinced a disposition to shield her lover at all hazards. She would not for one moment attempt to conceal their attachment. Indeed, that would have been absurd, for if the squire had not been looking at them for the last ten minutes from the library window, there were evidences in the shape of the pollen of the white lily on their faces that were too circumstantial to be disproved.

"By Jove! sir, I've a great mind to call my servants and have you kicked out of the house—only it would disgrace that silly girl. Come away, you hussy! Leave him

alone, and don't paw him over as if he were a pet puppy."

"I will not leave him. You may tear me from him, but you cannot divide our hearts."

"Go in doors, miss! I won't have any rebellion in my household. I never have had, and I won't begin now."

"I defy you! No parent can coerce his child's affection. I refuse to give up the man I love!"

"The man you—fiddlestick! What should a chit like you know about love? Go in doors, and go up to your own room. Do you hear me?"

"I do!"

"Then obey me this instant."

"Never again. You have attempted to control my heart, and I defy you! I renounce you!"

The squire made a step forward, as if to

drag her from Edward by main force. Bella drew herself up with all the dignity of a tragedy queen. "One step nearer, and I strike!"

The weapon with which she threatened her father was nothing more formidable than her little garden parasol, but one would have thought it was a dagger to judge from the fury of her words and the fierceness of her gesture. Indeed, the whole thing would have been too ludicrous if the men had not been so much in earnest.

Edward interposed. Stepping between Bella and her infuriated parent, he said as calmly as he could—

"Mr. Charlwood, I owe you an apology, and can therefore excuse the language you have applied to me. I was on my way to the house to tell you what you have now discovered for yourself. Unluckily I linger-

ed on the way when I met Miss Charlwood, and I must suffer the consequence in your belief that I have been clandestinely engaging her affections."

"Oh! you can talk, I daresay; but I'm not going to listen while that girl defies me."

"Bella, darling," whispered Edward, "for my sake—for both our sakes—obey him."

"Since *you* wish it, dearest," said Bella. She took both of his hands in hers, pressed them warmly, turned, and went in doors, where she watched the interview from behind the library curtains, ready at any moment to rush out and fling herself between the combatants.

It was hardly to be expected that Mr. Charlwood would be greatly appeased to see that his daughter, who refused to obey his parental commands, listened to the least word from Edward.

"Now, sir," he said, "what explanation can you give of this blackguardly conduct?"

"You will have the goodness to withdraw that word, sir."

"I'll see you blessed first!" said the squire; only "blessed" wasn't the word he used.

"Then I must withdraw it for you," said Edward, "excusing you to myself on the ground of your want of acquaintance with the habits of polite society."

"You'll do nothing of the sort, sir. But tell me what you mean by skulking about my premises, trying to sneak into my daughter's affections, like your beggarly brother did into those of Mr. What's-his-name's niece —his wife, you know—though, luckily, it was biter bit there. And so it will be here, young man, for deuce a shilling will you get with her!"

"I came here, sir, as a gentleman, to speak to a gentleman, not to bandy words with a blackguard, to borrow your own elegant phraseology. If you choose to talk like a rational human being, instead of a raving lunatic, or the keeper of the local beerhouse, I shall be happy to lay before you my prospects and intentions in asking your daughter's hand."

"As a gentleman, is it, you come? Caught making love to her on the sly, just as I should catch a chap robbing my henroost or poaching my preserves; only he'd be too honest, even then, to say he intended honourably."

"I see it is useless to attempt to argue with you, and childish to hope that you will listen to me in a gentlemanly spirit. I have told you I was on the way to the house, when I met Miss Charlwood and was de-

tained. I now tell you what I was on the road to tell you then—I love your daughter, have reason to believe that my love is returned, and would ask your permission to become her recognised suitor."

"May I ask," said the squire with mocking calmness, "what your means are? You are aware, of course, that the whole of my property goes to my son—that I do not mean to give my daughter a shilling?"

"I am the more glad to hear it, sir; for at least it clears my suit of the only objection to it than even you could find. It cannot be mercenary in that case."

"That depends on how long you have known my determination, which, I may as well mention, I have only known myself since her rebellious conduct here just now. But there is one other consideration. Since she has no money or property, it becomes

my duty to see that her intended husband has both. May I ask what your means are?"

Now was the time for poor Ted's great speech. But, alas! it was not forthcoming. He could only stammer out something about having a prospect before him; great men had risen from small beginnings by application; the highest honours in his profession were open to all; he would at least merit, if he did not gain, preferment.

"But that won't keep a wife. I had a brother in the army, sir, and he was no beggar with Lord knows how many debts tied round his neck. But he died an old greyheaded captain on half-pay. That for your preferment!" and he snapped his fingers in Edward's face. "Have you any other recommendations," he continued, "besides insolence, beggary, and debt?

Because if so, let me have 'em before my patience runs out, and I have you kicked down that gravel-walk."

Edward's blood was up now.

"You old scoundrel!" he said, stepping up to the old man with such evident anger that he shrank back a bit. "You are Bella's father, or I should have shaken the blaspheming old life out of you half-an-hour ago. Just have the goodness to call a few of your fellows here, and I'll really thank you, for, by Jove! you've got the fight up in me, and it would do me all the good in the world to pitch into them, though I should be sorry to hurt people whose only fault is that they are in the service of a man like yourself. You miserable old man! I pity you. I don't envy you the wealth and property that give you an opportunity of doubling your own condemnation. Go, walk

through that village there, and answer to your conscience, if you can, for the state in which those wretched people live. I'd rather be the poor man I am than the wealthy murderer you are. As for my attachment to your daughter, you can't kill that, thank Heaven, as you can your unhappy tenants. I can trust in her as she does in me, and we defy you!"

"If you're caught loitering about these premises, I'll have you ducked, as sure as you're alive."

"Never fear, sir. When I come I shall come openly."

"You'll precious quick go out again; and as for not coming secretly, didn't I catch you to-day?"

It was no use bandying words with the squire any longer. So Edward raised his hat to him stiffly, looked towards the house,

and, seeing Bella at the window, kissed his hand to her with fervour. She understood the action, and, opening the library window —a French one—came bounding gracefully over the lawn.

"What has passed, dearest Edward?"

"What has passed?" said her father. "Why, he says it's no use running after you if I won't give you any money, and so he's going."

"You know me better than that, Bella?"

"Oh! yes, Edward. But what has happened?"

"Your father will not listen to me, and forbids me the house!"

"But he cannot separate our hearts, Edward. We can still defy him!" and she struck a tragic attitude.

At this moment there came upon the scene no less a personage than Martha Ogleby.

"Please, sir," said she, with a calm face, quite unperturbed by the too evident storm that was raging around her—"please, sir, Mr. Harding, sir, there'm a boy from telegruff want to see you p'tickler, and missis have a-sent me to find 'ee."

It was out of the question in the presence of Martha Ogleby—who appeared to be under the impression that, having been sent for Edward, she ought to take him away with her, as she used to do the clothes in her early youth—to continue the discussion.

So Edward and Bella parted with a warm, long, lingering clasp of the hand; and then the former lifted his hat to the squire, who bowed stiffly, and thus the interview came to an end.

"What's the boy like?" asked Edward of Martha, as they left the Manor-house.

"A kind o' sojer, I reck'n, for he've a

band to his cap and a stripe down his legs, sir."

"Where did you say he came from?"

"From telegruff, sir, down to railway-station, sir."

Edward hurried home at once. A few minutes afterwards he rushed into the nursery, where Prue and her husband were devoting themselves to intense admiration of their little one as she sprawled about the floor.

"Jim! Prue! I'm off. The sepoys have mutinied in India, and I have immediate orders to rejoin my regiment. Mr. Martindale has kindly telegraphed to me privately, to give me early notice. I must be off without delay."

"And Bella?" asked Prudence.

"Bid her good-bye for me—perhaps for ever! For her father has forbidden our

engagement, and I must go away without bidding her farewell."

"Edward, trust to me," said the good, courageous little Prue. "I will watch over her, and be a sister to her while you are away. You can trust me, can't you?"

"Yes, you best of women!" said Ted, pressing her hand. "I would trust you with my life and my love. Take care of her and comfort her, poor girl!"

CHAPTER VI.

THE SQUIRE'S MALEDICTIONS.

WITH the first dawn of the day succeeding that on which the events told in the last chapter befell, Edward Harding was astir. He had busied himself till late at night with his packing, and he had barely had forty winks ere there came a tap at the window, and Thomas, the gardener, told him the pony carriage was waiting for him. He had some distance to drive to the railway, and wished to catch the morning mail to town.

So he descended and unbarred the door,

and let Thomas in to help him to carry his luggage downstairs. By the time this was done, Martha Ogleby made her appearance with a cup of warm tea and a bit of toast, which had been prepared in the nursery by Prudence. It was very welcome, for the morning was cold and misty—one of those dank, dark dawns that usher in the finest days, but which pierce to the very marrow of the luckless bird whom cruel Fate compels to be abroad early enough to catch the first worm.

Edward gulped down the tea, and crunched the toast—you see it was good toast that Prue made, or "crunch" would not be applicable to the case—and then he wrapped himself up in his cloak and rug, and bundled into the pony-trap beside Thomas. Thomas disdained wraps. He was attired in his usual garb, with a great deal of shirt-front,

and nothing particular by way of necktie. But Thomas was used to getting up early, and had become hardened to the morning air, which seemed to Edward to be simply cold-drawn essence of rheumatism.

Ted kissed his hand towards the nursery window, then towards the Manor-house, and after that said, "All right, Tom." Thereupon Bobbin, the pony, who, though a little queer in his off fore-leg, was a regular trotter, jumped forward as if he were going right out of the shafts. Then he settled to his pace, and went peg-peg-pegging along the quiet road, wrapped in grey mist, through which a something that might be sunlight was beginning to make itself felt. Up the hill out of Bremning Minor, under the avenue of chestnuts in Carptray-lane, and then out on the high road. How the little nag spanked along!

It was clearing off a bit. The distant hills loomed like ghosts in the distance, and in the valley below, the tree-tops and church spires were emerging from the spectral swathes of vapour. The hedges, sparkling all over with drops of night moisture, were plainly discernible; a little while ago they were like a row of squatting crones with spiky hair, while the trees, with their limbs flung across the road, were like the ghosts of cursing giants. Now you could distinguish their forms, and could tell the elms from the beeches, and the ashes from the limes.

Presently a few labouring men going afield were passed; then came a drover with some cattle; anon a market-cart; then a gig. Man was going forth to his work and to his labour, and day was broadening —kept broadening until the grey curtain was withdrawn, and the fresh landscape

stretched away on all sides. Yonder was a windmill, where the early miller had set his sails going already. Down that valley the smoke was rising from the cottage chimneys —breakfast betimes. And how green and velvety were the meadows and pastures where the cattle were lowing and the sheep bleating! There was the twitter of birds, too, with the notes of a lark somewhere over the cornfield beyond the brook. Day had begun in real earnest.

Ted dearly loved the country, and enjoyed the sights and sounds he noted in his early drive.

But how came he to be thinking of them? Surely he should have been musing on his Bella. Perhaps he ought, but he was not. Without intending to accuse him of being a humbug, I can't help thinking if either James or Prudence had been present he

would have been surrounded with a tender air of melancholy, which he certainly did not think it worth his while to assume for the edification of Thomas.

The old saying that every man possesses two distinct individualities is never truer than when it is applied to a man in love. There are inconsistencies in Edward's conduct that I can explain in no other way.

There was one Edward Harding who yesterday afternoon was so warm in his devotion to Bella Charlwood, so stern in his determination to make her his some day, so convinced that nothing could separate their hearts.

There was the Edward Harding who this morning had forgotten everything save how pleasant a cigar was in the cool dawn, and how jolly the country looked stepping out of the fog to see him pass.

Let me see, was not there a third Edward Harding a little while ago—an Edward Harding with nothing but the miserable reversion of a broken heart to bestow? An Edward Harding who didn't much care for Bella, but, having felt the pangs of misplaced love, was ready to feign affection rather than consign her to life-long misery? An Edward Harding who thought it rather a bore than otherwise to have to go and talk to the squire about an engagement? I'm rather inclined to think there was such an E. H. not many hours ago.

Where was he now? not to speak it profanely, which is, in parody of the *vox populi*, or slang of the streets. Where was he now? Defunct! And if a coroner's jury had to sit upon him, I hope, for the sake of one of the great pillars of the British Constitution—I mean the maxim that

"twelve heads are better than one"—that they would have found Squire Charlwood guilty of killing him. He did it. Oh! undoubtedly he did! The moment he set his face against the engagement, and most especially at the moment when he laughed at the utter impossibility of the two young people really caring enough for one another to bear a long engagement, Edward Harding, the careless and cold, died and was buried beneath that sneer.

If a man loves a woman or a woman a man, his or her affection may or may not outlive a long engagement. But if anyone, particularly a friend, ventures to doubt the possibility of its so surviving, I think you may safely bet on its tenacity of life in nine cases out of ten. Pride has so much more vital energy than love.

In the place of Edward Harding, with the

reversion of a broken heart to be disposed of to the highest bidder, there came into life Edward Harding the devoted and attached *fiancé* of Bella Charlwood. But at times, when there was no particular irritation of the bumps of affection or pride, that E. H. retired into private life and put up the shutters, and the senior partner, the E. H. who thought life jolly, and cigars very pleasant companions, carried on the business.

By the time daylight had pronounced itself very decidedly and clearly, the railway station hove in sight. In another ten minutes Thomas had driven up to the booking-office, and two or three porters, evidently fresh and just on to the day's work, were hauling Edward's baggage out of the vehicle. Edward got out and stretched his legs a bit up and down the platform, after taking his ticket.

There was nobody stirring except two

bagmen and the officials, and it was rather slow. But, fortunately, those benefactors of melancholy mankind, the advertisers, had provided amusement for Edward. He learnt that the reason why Archimedes jumped out of his bath and ran along the streets in a state of nature, shouting "I have found it!" was that he had invented a new pattern for a shirt. He was pictorially appealed to as one who kept a cow, a horse, a sheep, a pig, or a dog. He made the acquaintance of a young lady with long light hair, who was brushing her hair with a modified form of galvanic battery, and he was introduced to another young lady, who was also doing her hair in an ingeniously-disposed couple of mirrors, which must have repeated the reflections of the back and front of her head until the repetition became almost intoxicating. He gazed in admiration of a

pair of such marvellously-cut trousers that no human legs could ever have adapted themselves to them, and that consequently had to stand alone. He furthermore inspected lovely views of marine spots of great magnificence, which the letter-press beneath informed him were meant for a neighbouring fishing village that desired to be a watering-place, and was as much like one as these views were like it.

He was also, by way of cheerful preparation for his journey, invited to insure his life for a penny, which would also cover damages to legs and arms. He got a little bewildered here in trying to discover why your life was, when you travelled second-class, only half as valuable as it was when you travelled first. And before he had quite worked out this social problem, and long before he had half exhausted the stock

of amusement and information supplied by the advertising benefactors of the travelling solitary, there was a scampering to and fro of porters, and a frantic ringing of bells, and then the morning mail came gliding in to the platform.

"Scalperton! Scalperton!" cried the porter. At least, he was by courtesy supposed to call that. He really said, "Sca't'n."

A very sleepy gentleman turned out, yawning as if he were trying to turn himself inside-out through his throat. Another sleepy gentleman put his head out in a travelling head-gear very like a nightcap, and asked for the morning paper.

"Any more going on? Now, then, sir, take your place," said the guard, and Edward was bundled in with his sticks, wraps, and hat-box into a first-class carriage. In another minute the train was under weigh again.

A few hours later in this same morning, when James was reading his morning paper, and Prue was making breakfast, and after Prue the second had gone through the process of being dipped in her bath—with less resemblance to a lobser than would have occurred to you had you seen her in the earlier part of her career—when all the important events at the vicarage of Bremning Minor were either over or in progress, an event happened which caused as much surprise as if a thunderbolt had come down the chimney into baby's pap.

There came a ring at the front door, and Martha Ogleby—recognized by the invariable habit which one of her slippers had of coming down at heel—answered the summons. Then there was the sound of setting down boxes.

"That muff has missed his train," said James quietly.

"Or perhaps he has received another telegram to say he need not go," said Prue.

Enter Martha Oglcby. Not a twinkle of wonder illuminated her eye, which would have credited a codfish. Not the slightest of wonders struggling for utterance made her weak mouth look like an O.

"Please 'm 't be Miss Challood!" said Martha, as if she were ushering in James's matutinal eggs or the milk.

James and his wife both started.

Yes—it was Bella, with a cried face, and the daintiest of morning wrappers.

"Why, what has happened?" asked Prue.

Thereupon Bella burst into tears, and flung herself on Prue's neck.

"Tell me, Bella, what it is?"

"Oh! it's pup-pup-pupapa. He's gug-gug-gugone and bub-bub-broken off our engug-gug-gugagement, and it'll bub-bub-bubreak

our hearts, and now he's cuc-cuc-cursed me and tut-tut-turned me out of du-du-du-dudoors!" Here the weeping became almost hysterical.

"Turned you out of doors? Impossible!" said James.

Bella shook her head.

"Nun-nun-nuno! He's tut-tut-tuturned me off fuf-fuf-fuf-fuforever. He says he'll be ded-ded-ded-" (James began to be alarmed at this sentence, and thought in distress Bella was about to be too exact as to her father's expressions, but the conclusion set his mind at rest) "ded-dedefied no lul-lul-lulonger."

"There, Bella, dear, calm yourself. Don't give way so much. It will come all right. Don't cry!" said Prue.

Bella gradually allowed herself to be pacified, and then explained how all had happened. Of course her account of the trans-

action was not altogether impartial and unbiassed, but it was probably something like the truth, and if so, old Charlwood's conduct had been simply brutal. To be sure, such a lifelong tyrant was not exactly the sort of man to take very quietly the sudden disobedience of his daughter. But when she was obliged, in order to escape a beating, to run away and lock herself in her bedroom, it was carrying parental anger too far. A parley which took place after this was conducted with considerable warmth, and the upshot was that Bella was given till this morning to consider.

"If you don't," said Mr. Charlwood, "give up that puppy altogether, and beg my pardon by nine o'clock to-morrow, I'll pack you off, and never give you a shilling as long as I live."

I should have mentioned that I have

divested this proposition of a great many adjectives, expletives, and particularly active verbs, which, though they lent vitality and force to the squire's oratory, might not look quite so well on paper.

At nine o'clock—probably just about the time when her Edward was coiling himself up for a nap on the cushions of the railway carriage—Bella was summoned to the library. She was asked for her decision, and she boldly stated her determination to be true to the man to whom she had plighted her troth. Another storm followed, which ended in the squire's cursing his disobedient child, and bidding her quit his roof.

How far Bella was impressed—in spite of her tears—by this terrible denunciation, may be judged from the fact that she afterwards admitted to Prudence—who was a little horrified—that the scene had reminded her

very much of the interview between Marmaduke Mortimer and his father in the second volume of *Edith Valery, or the Baron's Malediction.*

James and Prudence were very awkwardly placed. If Bella had run away from her father's roof, they would have had no difficulty in deciding what was their duty. But when he himself drove her out of doors they could not send her back.

James adjourned to his study, to think the matter over, leaving Prue to comfort Bella. He was horribly worried at the new turn events had taken. He felt that Edward and Bella were right, and he knew the squire was wrong, and yet they were not *so* right, and he was not *so* wrong, that strict justice could pronounce decidedly in favour of either. Edward had acted honourably, and the squire had behaved like a

savage. Yet, after all, a father has a right to object to have his daughter committed to a long engagement before she is twenty-one. He has also a right to exact obedience from his child. What was to be done? Poor James was quite at a loss, and heartily wished Bella Charlwood had never been born. On the other hand, I am afraid Prue was inwardly rejoicing at Bella's being thus placed under her care and immediate supervision. Prue was not the sort of person to undertake a charge lightly, or, having undertaken it, to neglect it. She had had Bella intrusted to her by Ted on his departure for India, and she had made up her mind to mount guard over that amiable damsel like a dragon.

As soon as she had soothed Bella's agitated feelings, she stepped out of the room and came to James's study.

"Well, my philosophical boy, what is to be done?"

"Well, you sage girl, I don't know. But I think I must go and talk to the squire. What a scandal it will be! I fear my influence in the parish will suffer, for they will think I am encouraging domestic rebellion. I fear it will do harm. But it can't be helped. At any rate I must try and talk the squire round if possible."

Prue agreed that this was the correct thing to do, and accordingly James started on his peace-making errand to the Manor-house.

He found the squire pacing up and down the library like a wild beast, and the first words that greeted him were abusive ones aimed at his brother. James, however, had been prepared for this, and had schooled himself to bear taunt and insult sooner than abandon his mission. He talked to the old

gentleman quietly, and argued the matter dispassionately.

"What would Mr. Charlwood's friends and neighbours say?"

Mr. Charlwood did not care a curse—and he cared very little for curses, if we may judge from the lavish way in which he threw them about, even in the presence of a clergyman.

"He had better take his daughter back, and try a milder form of treatment. She might be persuaded, but not driven to think as her father wished her. Before there was any scandal abroad he had better take her home again," urged James.

Whereupon Mr. Charlwood lost all patience and all restraint. Edward, he vowed, was copying James. He was trying to sneak off with a wealthy and foolish girl, in spite of the wishes of her relations. He could

see that, could Mr. Charlwood, and he could see too that James was only persuading him to take his disobedient child back because it would ruin his brother's game as a speculation if her father discarded her.

Even quiet James could not put up with this in silence. He rebuked the squire for his violence, which led him to say things that were false; and he spoke so very plainly his opinion of the squire's conduct in the matter that the old gentleman became almost beside himself with rage.

"I don't think that you're quite aware, you money-snatching parson, that you're my servant—mine!"

James admitted that he was not aware of it.

"Then let me tell you you are! Two hundred a year of your salary is paid you as chaplain to the Manor-house, and on con-

dition of your performing daily service in the chapel. There is no chapel now, for I've turned it into the stables. So, by George, you can't perform the conditions, and you shan't have the pay."

James was thunderstruck. But it was quite true, though both the squire and J. Middleborough had said nothing about it. By one of those delightful muddles and incongruities the income of the incumbent of Brenming Minor was a combination of two sums. He got two hundred a year as chaplain to the Manor-house, and one as the curate of the parish.

This was a serious matter. The squire kept his word, and poor James submitted the case to an eminent lawyer. But there was no help for it—Mr. Charlwood really possessed the sole power of nomination, and he had not legally presented James, and so

could turn him out any day. So James and Prue had to submit to lose two-thirds of their income at one blow. They groaned, but paid. It was a struggle.

"Well," thought Prue, "I must work all the harder with my pen, that's all. I wonder when my novel will be out?"

CHAPTER VII.

A RISING BARRISTER.

VERY pleasant rooms in the Temple indeed were those of Philip Charlwood. They looked across the gardens to the river—a pleasant outlook.

They were luxuriously furnished, and in very good taste. He was a polished gentleman was Philip Charlwood, in which respect he was better than his father, you will probably think, and you will be right.

The rooms are wainscotted with old oak, which throws out finely the proofs and select prints that in massive but quiet frames

adorn the walls. The curtains are of rich maroon cloth, with a broad gold band for border, and looped up with a cord and tassels of dead gold. There is no gilt cornice with brass curtain-rods. They are hung from behind a deep silk fringe, also of maroon, with small gold beads at the end of each tag. This fringe goes all round the room, taking the place of a cornice. It conceals the rod from which the pictures are suspended. Each picture is hung with two fine wires, which go up perpendicularly in lines parallel to the upright divisions of the panelling to the concealed rod. By this means there are no cords cutting those upright lines at angles, as would be the case in the ordinary mode of picture-hanging—that is, by a loop of cord over a nail. All pictures are hung "on the line." The spaces above them are occupied with bits of sombre

armour, rare specimens of porcelain, and ivory carvings. Between the pictures, on little oak bracelets, are a few choice casts from the antique in Parian.

A low settee, with cushions as plump and soft as young partridges, runs all round the room, at least where there are no doors or cupboards.

The bookcase, instead of standing against the wall, is an octagonal pedestal—each side about two feet high. It is surmounted by a large candelabrum of brass and Venetian glass, its branches filled with wax-candles. It moves easily on castors over the thick pile of the Turkey carpet. A child might push it to any part of the room where a reference to any book on its shelves was needed.

Easy chairs and lounges of every description would crowd the room if it were not a large one, and if they had not been so ad-

mirably arranged as not to be in the way anywhere. They, like the cushions of the settee, are covered with maroon cloth—not velvet, it is too clinging and hot—with dead gold fringe.

The carpet, I have said, is a Turkey carpet. To tread on it is like walking on the mossy, springy turf of some well-kept ancient lawn. Its colour is one of those happy combinations of bright hues which delight but do not dazzle, and give as a whole an effect of subdued warm brown.

The ceiling is an old-fashioned painted ceiling. Age has toned it down to a pleasant sombreness.

There is a large bay-window, which is divided from the room by curtains. The sashes open down to the floor. This forms a sort of smoking alcove, and it is fitted up in the Eastern style. There are no chairs, but piles of fat, well-to-do cushions, which

the smoker can arrange to his comfort as he chooses. Small trays, just large enough to hold a cup of coffee and a cigar-ash-holder are suspended against the wall from telescopic brass rods, which, drawing out horizontally, give accommodation for the smoker wherever he may happen to sit. A punkah, which is moved by clock-work, hangs overhead to waft away the smoke if necessary. In the centre of the window is a small fountain with a porcelain basin, into which the water falls with a pleasant tinkle when the jet is playing.

I should have mentioned that in the large apartment there were two small basin shells, the one of silver the other of porcelain, in small niches in the walls. Into these, from marble dolphins'-heads, fell a tiny thread of perfumed water with an agreeable music.

The bedroom was fitted up with equal

taste, and in much the same sort of style. There, however, the hangings were rose-colour, and the furniture ebony inlaid with mother-of-pearl. The dressing-table was covered with toilet necessaries and toilet luxuries. All the fittings were of tortoise-shell inlaid with mother-of-pearl. The mirror was an oval one with a splendidly-designed gilt frame, supported with silver cupids, and draped gracefully with lace. The bed was a species of hammock. It was a net of stout silk cord, stretched—not tightly—on an iron frame, which was suspended at the four corners by broad bands of some elastic material, that fastened with hooks into rings in the ceiling. A more luxurious couch, or one that would adapt itself more readily and comfortably to the movements and positions of its occupant, it would be impossible to conceive.

What chambers for a lawyer's practice! you say, perhaps. But they were not the business chambers of Philip Charlwood. Those grimy offices were situate in Pump-court, and were as dull, dingy, and depressing as they had need be. It was there Philip spent his mornings. His afternoons and nights were passed in the sybarite splendours I have been trying to describe.

He was a man with a strongly-developed bump of order, was Philip Charlwood. His rooms were a proof of it. Not a picture was hung a hair's breadth crooked. Not a book was out of place on the shelves. All things were arranged most symmetrically—even an apparent negligence which here and there gave a piquancy was governed by rule and measure. Not a rose-leaf in this couch of rose-leaves must be crumpled, or Philip's delight in it would fly for ever.

He is most successful at the bar, owing almost entirely to his gift of order. His brain is like his room. There is not the slightest confusion there, though perhaps it is not so well furnished. He arranges his arguments and lays out his work—his points, and rejoinders, and pleas—and knows just where to go for them when he wants them. "Go to Charlwood," say the lawyers whenever any very intricate case presents itself. People say he must get his Q. C. before long, and no one doubts that he will reach the bench. And a capital judge he will make.

He has worked very hard indeed, and has made a great deal of money, for even the handsome allowance he has from his father wants considerable eking out from other sources to enable him to indulge his extravagant tastes. He has compiled law books that have sold well and attracted considerable

attention, and he has contributed some able critical papers to the legal reviews.

He has made many acquaintances, almost all of them well worth knowing, either for position or qualities.

One of his chief friends is Marcus Lysaght, who is shortly to be Earl of Mountgarret, for his father it is calculated cannot live many years upon neat whiskey, even at such a healthy place as Ballygarret, county Tipperary. Marcus Lysaght, the honourable, is a harmless sort of young man. He has little of the Irish "divvle," but a good deal of the Irish dawdle, about him. He was sent over to enter the Inner Temple because the old earl had a great notion of Templars, derived principally from the *Spectator* (I mean the *Spectator* to which Dicky Steele was, not that to which Mr. Tom Brown is, a contributor). But Marcus, somehow, had not, during

a residence of four years, contrived to keep more than one term. The chief qualification to be called to the bar and permitted to practise as a counsel in courts of law consists, as most of my readers are probably aware, in the eating of a certain number of dinners for a certain number of terms. And Marcus never could manage to eat these dinners. He generally spent a good deal of time in Ireland during the shooting, and at the West-End during the season; and the result was he ran his dinners so fine that they had to be done in the last few days of term, and he was sure to be too late for one if not more of the requisite number, and so lost his term. Fortunately it did not matter.

How it was that Philip Charlwood and he became such close friends and allies it is impossible to account for, except in the way in which we explain the reason why some

men choose for wives the women we should have thought least suited to their tastes. Their dispositions were so entirely different, that by force of contrast they admired each other.

However, it is time that I should get on with my story.

Philip Charlwood is taking his early cup of chocolate and his letters in bed. As he turns the letters over and inspects the handwritings he comes on a missive from his father.

"Hullo! here's the governor taking the trouble to write. It must be something important!"

He breaks the seal and begins to read. At first he smiles. Then he looks grave. And by the time he has finished the perusal he looks angry.

"Confound the old fool! He ought to

have known better, for he has had a daughter these nineteen years, and I haven't had one at all, and yet I shouldn't have made such a stupid mistake."

He meditates a little—then he re-reads the letter—says "the stupid old fool!" once more—which is not at all proper, since by those terms he means his father—and then rings for his valet and proceeds to dress.

When he has performed that operation to his entire satisfaction, he adjourns to the next room, where he takes his breakfast. All this is done quite methodically and gravely. Even the vagaries of "the stupid old fool" are not permitted to derange the morning customs of Philip Charlwood.

Breakfast over, Philip goes into the bay-window and flings himself down on the cushions for his morning cigar and his morning meditations. Chaffers, his clerk, who

has been trained into the nicest punctuality by his master, knocks at the door at the very moment that his master has arranged himself on the cushions to his satisfaction.

Chaffers brings the two briefs on which Philip is engaged for this day. Philip glances at the first, "Toggleton *v.* Pomtrow," opens it, runs it over, turns to the outside again, and sees, "With you, Mr. Fuffy."

"Chaffers, step round to Mr. Fuffy, and ask him if he will be good enough to come and consult with me at eleven at the office."

Then he opens and reads, more carefully, the other brief, "Dickery *v.* Moon." It is an intricate case of disputed title. In about a quarter of an hour he has digested it and laid out its bones, carefully ticketed in his chamber of mnemonics. Then he calls for a *Bradshaw.* It is brought him by his clerk, and he finds that a train at two-fifty

will take him down to Bremning Minor in time for dinner—or, to be precise (one must be careful with so particular a gentlemen as Philip), to Scalperton, whence he can post to Bremning Minor in time for dinner.

He then calculates the chances of his despatching the case of "Dickery *v.* Moon" by that hour, and comes to the conclusion that if a certain objection he has got laid out ready for use in one corner of his brain is not overruled he can manage it easily. As for "Toggleton *v.* Pomtrow," his junior must look after that. What do big men get enormous fees for, unless it be to give their juniors an opportunity of distinguishing themselves in important cases?

At eleven Philip supplied Mr. Fuffy with everything needed to win the victory in the case of "Toggleton *v.* Pomtrow"—except

the brain to understand and the memory to retain what he tells him.

By one Philip has fired off the great objection in the case of "Dickery *v.* Moon," and it has been held good after about a quarter of an hour's skirmishing, in which the judge, who eventually gave it to Philip, took up every possible argument against, which Philip was glad to see, for then he knew the learned baron meant to decide in his favour.

By two-fifty Philip has reached the station, has taken his place in the train, and is being whirled away to Scalperton.

But between one-fifteen and two-fifty what has he been doing? He has been smoking a cigar in Temple-gardens, and arranging his programme for his visit to Bremning Minor.

On his way to his rooms to pick up his portmanteau he calls on Marcus Lysaght. That young gentleman has not made up

his mind yet, having been at a ball last night.

"All right, old fellow," says Philip, "I don't want to disturb you. You know term ends to-morrow, and I've no more causes, so I'm off home for a few days. Now look here—are you engaged anywhere about now?"

"No, I ain't booked for anything till next month."

"All right. I haven't been down to the governor's for an age, so I must go alone to get over the domestic tendernesses. But will you hold yourself in readiness and engaged to follow me the day after to-morrow?"

"Shall be delighted, old chap."

"Done, then! Good-bye!"

"Good-bye!"

"Yes," says Philip to himself as he goes

down-stairs, "I think that will give me time enough."

When he reaches Bremning Minor he finds his father in a state of chronic ill-humour, which is a thing that Philip can no more stand than he can understand. Ill-humour is a derangement, and he hates anything disorderly.

So he protests against it, and tells his father that he has come down on purpose to smooth over this little difficulty with "that blessed girl," but that he won't do it if there is any thunderstorm business.

The squire is a little afraid of Philip, so he softens out the wrinkles somewhat, and gets chirpy even, when Philip promises to set the whole thing straight over a bottle of port after dinner. So after dinner the squire fills himself a glass of his very rarest old port, and passes the decanter to his son.

Philip understands the signal, and draws his chair up to the end of the table where his father is, and taking up the nutcrackers as if they were a brief, makes a slight flourish with them and opens.

"First of all, sir, I suppose you see plainly from this folly that Bella has arrived at an age when it will be well to consign her to some eligible suitor?"

The father nodded.

"You have none such in your eye?"

The father shook his head.

"That's right!"—a wave of the nutcrackers—"because I have."

The old gentleman looks at him attentively.

"He's an earl. That is, he will be in a year's time at the outside—an Irish earl—Lord Mountgarret. Well-born, wealthy, agreeable, and a great chum of mine. Will that do?"

"Yes, if we can only get this cursed nonsense out of her nonsensical noddle, the hussy!"

"So far so well," says Philip, ticking off point one mentally. "Now for the next thing. Where's this young fellow—what is his name?"

"Harding. He has been ordered to join his regiment in India."

"Good. And where's Bella?"

"At the parson's, Harding's brother, who encourages her, and——"

"All right. We'll settle that another time. You told her to leave the house?"

"I did."

"Then you must send me to fetch her back again. Harshness isn't a bit of use with a woman—especially such a one as Bella. We've all the devil's own tempers for obstinacy—you know that well enough.

My only wonder is that you didn't drive her into an elopement with him. Easy does it. We'll get her back here, treat her more kindly than ever, and then we'll bring Lysaght on the scene. She is only a silly, romantic girl, who falls in love after the mode taught in those blessed novels she has stuffed her noddle with. She'll forget this What's-his-name in a little while, and if Lysaght only makes play, he'll cut him down by the beginning of term. Don't you see the game?"

The squire does see the game, and cannot but admit that it is ingenious enough, though it goes sorely against the grain to pardon Bella and ask her to return.

"But you are settling all this without your friend's knowledge. Supposing Bella doesn't suit him?"

"Supposing she doesn't, he wouldn't mind

flirting with her a bit to oblige me and to wean her from that folly. But he and I are very old chums indeed, and it has been a sort of joking arrangement for years that he is to marry my sister. He has seen portraits of her, and the notion begun in half jest has ended in real earnest, and unless I am very much mistaken Bella will be Countess of Mountgarret before she dies. But I must go and call on Bella at the parson's. What sort of fellow is he?"

The squire gives his notion of James Harding's character, and tells Philip that he has docked the two hundred a year.

Philip thinks it over, and weighs the pros and cons with great nicety. At last he says—

"Yes, you must stick to that. I shouldn't have advised you to do it, but as it is done you must not withdraw, or the beggar will

think you have not the right, which being, I fancy, doubtful, you must stick to your position the more firmly in order to put a good face on it. Besides, this will keep up a coolness between this house and the parsonage, which is desirable, for of course they would fight their brother's battle against Lysaght. Besides, two hundred a year is two hundred a year, and I know a poor barrister who would be deuced glad of it—he'd be able to keep a private hansom then, and perhaps a park hack."

"I'll tell you what it is, Philip, you've got a fairish allowance as it is, but I'm cursed if you shan't have the other two hundred if you settle all this matter satisfactorily. Yes, by Jove, you shall; and if your friend Earl Lysaght—no, Mountgarret I mean—marries her, you shall have a couple more on the wedding-day."

"Then, egad," said Philip to himself, "he *shall* marry her, whether he likes it or not!"

I am afraid Philip Charlwood was slightly mercenary.

CHAPTER VIII.

PHILIP CHARLWOOD, PEACE-MAKER.

AT the earliest reasonable hour on the morning after his arrival at Bremning Minor, Philip Charlwood presented himself at the Parsonage. Arrived at the front gate, he found Martha Ogleby watching Prue the Second picking daisies on the lawn.

"Is Mr. Harding in?" asked Philip with a fascinating smile that was entirely thrown away, Martha's impenetrable and imperturbable nature having a great deal of the duck's back about it, in its relations even to flattery.

"'Es, I b'lieve, sir," was the reply, with the immediate further addition—"Don't 'ee do that, pretty dear!" This was not addressed to Philip, nor did it arise from his offering a salute, or any such gallantry. It was intended for baby, who, being at this early period of her existence a little backward in natural history, appeared to be under the impression that she was a graminivorous animal, and was making a light repast of daisies and dandelions. I don't know that there's any harm in daisies, and I am aware that dandelion, under the medicinal *nom de guerre*, *taraxacum*, is highly beneficial in certain cases. But as a baby with a liver complaint would be a strange anomaly, I think Martha was quite right in leaving Philip a moment while she extracted the blossoms, an operation to which little Prue strongly objected.

Philip waited patiently till the difficulty was adjusted. His long experience as a barrister in managing stupid and refractory witnesses had made a forensic Job of him. When the last daisy had been disgorged, he returned to the charge.

"Will you take that in to Mr. Harding for me with my compliments, and say I should like five minutes' conversation with him?" said he, holding out his card.

"'Es, sure," said Martha, "if 'ee don't mind watchin' of baby while I go!"

"Only too happy," said Philip.

Thereupon Martha seized the card, imprinting in so doing on one corner a black thumb-mark which Thomas Bewick would have engraved with delight and interest.

"Doan't 'ee let she ate none of thosemy," she added as a parting injunction, pointing to some red berries on a shrub.

Keeping to the last minute a retrospective eye on baby, and thereby nearly bringing up suddenly against the door-post instead of entering the door, Martha Ogleby took in Philip's card.

She knocked very gently at the study, where James was engaged on his sermon.

"Come in!" said James hastily, and then seeing who it was, he asked, "What is it?" He was just at the end of his "secondly," and, deep in his discourse, did not like the interruption.

"It be a bit o' paper, I reck'n," said Martha, standing at the door and carefully inspecting the card, as to the nature of which she supposed her master was questioning her. When she saw the black thumb-mark, she gave an expressive cluck, like a horrified hen who has overlaid an egg, and proceeded to adjust a corner of her apron over

her finger and thumb in order to hold the card.

"Bring it here, then, Martha," said James, who had long learnt that it was better to let Martha "slide," as the Americans say, than to attempt corrections and explanations.

Martha delivered the card with, "And, sir, please, he do say his compliments, and he'd be glad of five minutes' confussation."

"Philip Charlwood, Esq.!" said James, reading the name with astonishment, not unmingled with anger. "Tell him to go and be hanged!"

"'Es, sir," said Martha the obedient and literal, preparing to convey the message without astonishment or scruple.

"Bless the girl, I believe if I told her to drown the baby she'd go and do it. Here! Martha! Stop!"

"'Es, sir," said the imperturbable, returning.

"Where is he?"

"He be minding Miss Prue, sir!"

"Good gracious!" ejaculated James, "how on earth did that come about?"

"I axed 'un," said the stolid one. "I couldn't 'a' comed to bring thickee for him if he hadn't."

"Go at once and ask him into the drawing-room!"

"'Es, sure, sir."

"And, Martha!"

"'Es, sir."

"You needn't tell him to go and be hanged!"

"Oh? 'es, sure, sir!" said Martha, as if she would have conveyed the message unless her master had expressly withdrawn it.

Philip in the meantime had grown heart-

ily tired of his charge. Miss Prue, with thorough feminine shrewdness, discovered that she had got a new attendant, and at once protested against such a change, with a view to seeing which would obtain the mastery. In vain Philip hushed and clucked, and dangled his watch-chain and charms —Prue shrieked steadily till she was red in the face.

"What the deuce would old Baron Bradley say if he saw me so employed?" thought Philip to himself as he chirped, and clucked, and nodded his head after the fashion in which, as he had observed, matrons usually attempt to pacify obstreperous infants.

"Tchuck, tchuck, tchuck! Diddy, diddy, diddy! M'pew!" said Philip, nodding all the while like the presiding genius (in the form of a mandarin) of a tea-warehouse.

"Ya-a-a! Boo-o! Eee-e-e!" shrieked Prue the Second, kicking convulsively, like one of those queer dancing cardboard figures whose *levator* and *extensor* muscles are represented by bits of packthread.

At this moment Martha reappeared on the scene. At the sight of her, baby immediately ceased crying and began to chuckle and crow with that extraordinary infantile versatility which makes sandwiches of sadness and gladness of such true Vauxhall consistency, that you can't tell where the bread-and-butter ends and the ham begins, so intimately are they amalgamated.

"Come to its Martha, then, a pretty! Dancey, dancey, diddy! Upsy daisy, cluck! cluck! cluck!" said Martha snatching up Prue, and utterly disregarding Philip until she had restored the child to complete sunshine.

Martha's imperturbability was only relaxed in favour of one person in the world, and that was baby, whom she adored with great vigour, and of whose lightest want and wish she was acutely sensible. When, therefore, Miss Prue was rendered once more happy and contented, Martha became conscious that there was such a being as Philip Charlwood, and that she had a message to give him.

"If you please, will you walk in—up to the ceiling, down to the ground!—into the drawin'-room—Jump, boh! there we go!—and master 'll come to 'ee—Dancey, dancey, diddy, bounce!" said Martha, interpolating passages of nursery lore as she delivered her message.

"Will you be good enough to show me the way?" said Philip.

"'Es, sure, if Miss Prue will go in-doors, sir."

Accordingly, Martha piloted Philip up the path and into the passage. But here baby began to exhibit signs of displeasnre at being brought into the house, so Martha hurriedly directed Philip to the drawing-room door, and turned back into the garden

"Confoundedly awkward!" thought Philip. "Suppose there is some one there!"

But there was no help for it, so he put on a bold face and walked up to the drawing-room door and tapped.

"Come in!" said a female voice.

Philip entered. His sister and Prudence were engaged in arranging flowers in the glasses.

"La! if it is not Philip!" exclaimed Bella.

Prudence drew herself up. She thought Philip took a great liberty in walking in unannounced in this way.

That gentleman immediately detected the reason of her hauteur, and said—

"Mrs. Harding must excuse this intrusion, which is not my fault. I was being shown into the room by the servant at Mr. Harding's direction, when baby—what a charming child, Mrs. Harding!—protested against being brought in out of the garden, where I have had the honour to act as her nurse for some minutes."

Prue immediately attributed the whole difficulty to the proper source—Martha—and became more gracious. What mother can find it in her heart to be stern with a man who speaks of baby as Philip spoke of little Prue?

"It is for me to apologise for the girl's stupidity and baby's misconduct."

"I can't hear a word against baby, Mrs. Harding. Fidelity to a lady whose servant I have had the honour of being—though I must own I was discharged very speedily—

will not allow me to listen to anything of the sort."

"Whatever has brought you down here, Philip?" asked Bella, whose interest in baby was far too small to outweigh her curiosity as to the reason of her brother's visit.

"What brought me down here, eh? Why you, you silly girl, and that foolish old gentleman up at the Manor-house."

"You know, then"——

"Know everything. Of course I do! That old muff of a governor of yours—only he can't govern you—wrote to me at once, and I set off forthwith to bring all this nonsense to an end."

At this moment James Harding entered with an apology on his lips for keeping Philip waiting. But when he saw the young fellow evidently on such a pleasant footing already with his wife and Bella, he was too surprised to speak.

"Oh, dear Mr. Harding, this is my brother Philip," said the gushing Bella; "he has come to see us righted. Isn't he a dear good boy?"

"I am very glad to hear Mr. Charlwood has come to Bremning for so good a purpose. I only wish he had been here to hinder instead of healing this difference."

"Oh, I'll set it all right in a minute, Mr. Harding. As soon as you can spare this spirited young woman we shall be glad to have her back at the Manor-house, where her father is anxiously waiting to take her again into his arms."

"But, Philip, I will *not* consent to give up"——

"You won't be asked to give up anything or anybody, my child, so say no more about it. I am sorry, Mr. Harding, I had not the pleasure of meeting your brother. Have you

heard from him since his departure?"

"No, not yet. At least *we* have not, though some one else may," said James, looking at Bella.

"What, me?" said that young lady. "Oh dear no; not a line, the bad boy!"

"Ah! he was always a bad correspondent. His great friend, Martindale, once told me that he had never received more than two notes from him in his life."

"A bad correspondent," said Philip internally. "All the better! We shall have less difficulty in choking him off."

"Bella, dear," said Prue, going up to her young friend and kissing her, "I shall be very sorry to lose you, but I am so glad you and your father will be friends again. It is so shocking to have dissensions in families."

"It is indeed," says Philip, with an air of

great earnestness. "And now let me explain what has happened, which it is due to you, Mr. and Mrs. Harding, that I should do. On hearing from my father what had occurred I at once saw he had been very much mistaken, and I came straight off to him and told him so. It is impossible to rule the affections, and it is wrong to interfere with the attachments of young people; at least, that is my opinion, and I did not scruple to tell the governor so. After some argument the old gentleman, whose only vice is that he is a little hasty and obstinate, gave way, and asked me to become the peace-maker between him and Bella. I am to tell that giddy girl from him that he regrets the angry words and cruel speeches he made to her, and entreats her to return home. She shall be received back and restored to the same place in his affection as

before. He will not attempt to dictate to her as to the disposal of her heart, and will not in any way interfere with her engagement. Will that suit you, Bella?"

"You're the best of brothers, Philip. I know all this is the work of your kind heart," said Bella. But, between you and me, I believe in her heart of hearts she was not very grateful for having the gilt of romance rubbed off the gingerbread of existence.

"To you, Mr. Harding, I am to convey an apology for his having forgotten himself in an interview with you, and used language which he should not have used before a clergyman. I trust you will not refuse to accept the *amende*."

"Certainly not. I am only too happy to think that Mr. Charlwood did not really feel and mean what he expressed."

"Oh no, not he! But you know he's a very queer card, as proud as Lucifer, and he doesn't like coming down like this and eating his own words. You mustn't, between ourselves, expect him to be very warm or gracious just yet. He won't get over the humiliation for some time, and if you take my advice you will avoid all reference to the disagreement when you meet."

"I should never think of raking up old grievances."

"I thought not. I was sure of it from the way in which my father spoke of you at the time when you got this place. You know him I'm sure, by this time, so I can talk unreservedly to you. He's a queer lot, and very obstinate, so you must expect him to fight shy of you for a long time. But he'll come round when he thinks all this is quite forgotten. What a bore pride of this

sort is, isn't it? Thank goodness, I have none of it!"

"It is a fruitful cause of unhappiness."

"By the way, you will excuse the question, but is there any pecuniary hitch between you?"

"There is. Your father——"

"No! Don't tell me the particulars, please! I have no wish to intrude on that topic, but I guessed there was something of the sort from an allusion he made. I would recommend you to say nothing about it—leave it alone, and I don't doubt that it will be righted. Of course, I wouldn't presume to dictate, but I am so anxious that all should be settled on a comfortable basis again between you. Squire and clergyman ought to pull together, or woe betide the poor parish!"

"You are quite right."

"I believe so, and therefore take the liberty of addressing you as to what, knowing the old boy as I do, will bring about a proper understanding. If you try to set him right he is sure to go wrong."

"I will avoid the subject, though I should greatly like to point out where I think the injustice lies."

"Don't, for goodness' sake! You'll gain your point better by silence. It's always easier to lead than to drive—ask anybody who ever had a pig to take to market?"

In this way the shrewd Philip led the conversation on, and made himself most agreeable. He artfully elicited all James's particular hobbies, and what views he took on disputed Church matters, and contrived to make it appear that his own opinions were exactly the same. He took great pains to make himself pleasant to Prue, and

therefore insisted on having Prue the Second brought in. After some little difficulty that young female was prevailed upon to sit on his knee, and play with his gold watch, which she of course instantly conveyed to the infant's usual repository—her mouth; but Philip, though he was very particular about his watch, punctuality being one of his prides, did not, by word or change of countenance, express the least alarm when this rapid act of voracity was performed.

In the interim Bella was upstairs packing her boxes, and preparing to return to the Manor-house. Martha Ogleby, released from the responsibility of baby, was told off as an assistant, and aided Bella to arrange her dresses in her trunks.

Even the variety and splendour of Bella's wardrobe did not rouse Martha from her calm. She only looked twice at the collars

and cuffs, and wondered if the washerwoman who got them up used French stiffening as her mother did. With the sole exception of baby and her wants, Martha had not a thought beyond that washing-tub in the gentle steam of which she had passed her childhood— a fact which may explain the sodden state of her faculties.

By-and-by Bella's boxes were ready, and Thomas wheeled them off in triumph to the Manor-house on a barrow. Philip and Bella bade good-bye to the good parson and his wife. Bella was overflowing with protestations of gratitude; Philip was exceedingly civil, promising to drop in again soon, and saying how much indebted he was to them for their kindness to Bella, and for the position they had taken with reference to the recent unhappy family quarrel. He prevailed upon Miss Prue, by dint of put-

ting his signet-ring on her thumb, and allowing her a parting suck at his watch, to give him a kiss when he went away.

This was done with the view of propitiating Prue the elder, and not from any taste for babies' kisses, which, it must be owned, are apt to be erratic and moist. As soon as he was out of sight, beyond that parsonage gate, Philip took out his handkerchief and rubbed the bridge of his nose, where a slight dampness marked the place where baby had kissed him, and when he got to the Manor-house he went up to his room and washed his face scrupulously.

Well! if he had such a horror of infantile caresses, and only submitted to them with the view of propitiating Prue, he might have spared himself the trouble.

"What an agreeable fellow!—and so clever! I wish he was here oftener," said

James as he retired to his sermon once more.

Prue was silent.

"Don't you like him, Prue?" said her husband, interpreting the silence.

"No, I don't, James. He's deceitful,—a —what *is* the word?"

"Humbug, my dear?"

"Well, I meant hypocrite, but perhaps your word, though not quite so ladylike, describes him better. He's a great humbug, then, James—there!"

CHAPTER IX.

PLOTS AND PLANS.

THE squire did not receive Bella with so good a grace as her brother had led her to expect, but Philip managed to pacify and keep her quiet. His was no easy task. He was much in the same position as a fireman who, hose in hand, stands in a house that has been burned down, and in which the fire is not yet quite extinguished. He has to keep playing on the scorched ruins to prevent the flame from breaking out again, and as long as there is a tongue of fire to be seen darting up he has to prevent the adja-

cent houses from catching fire; and all this time, at any moment, the whole tottering edifice may crash down upon him at once.

Philip Charlwood stuck to his post bravely, and more than once extinguished what might have been the commencement of a new conflagration; but it was rather nervous work, and he did not like it. As the danger of a fresh outbreak was chiefly due to his father's overbearing temper, he determined to give him a serious talking to.

Accordingly, after dinner, Philip, having opened the door for his sister to leave, returned to the table, and, filling himself a glass of port, proceeded to lecture his father.

"I'll tell you what it is, governor. If you don't take more care, and swallow your anger with less perceptible gulps, all my labour will be thrown away."

"What do you mean, sir? I won't be—"

"Come, come! I never quarrel—nothing's worth it. I wouldn't put myself to such an inconvenience as to get into a rage on any account. So don't make a row, because if you do, off I go to town, and then you will be just where I found you."

"I won't have her confounded airs!"

"You shan't have 'em any longer than I can help, but you really must give her her head now—you must indeed."

"To let her bolt to the deuce?"

"Not a bit of it. When a horse bolts, don't try to pull up by sheer strength, because he's stronger than you. Urge him on with whip and spur, and he'll pretty quick tire, or stop from mere obstinacy!"

"Humph! Well, I'll try."

"You *must*—you'll ruin my plan if you don't, and then good-bye to the Countess of

Mountgarret. Don't you know that girl's disposition yet? She would never have made this engagement if it had not been out of opposition, and she will drop it now as soon as she finds you don't mind about it. She's as full of romantic, sentimental trash as this glass is of port. Check, and she'll bolt; urge her, and she'll stop."

"You ought to be a father of a family, Philip, you're so wise about the training of young people."

"You may laugh, sir, but I'll back myself against any one. I've had no practice, but my theory is one that can't be beaten. I know it's right, for it has been tried to some sort of extent."

"Indeed, and where?"

"In a travelling caravan of wild beasts."

"What do you mean?"

"That I got the hint of it from a man

called 'Signor Smizzi, the Monarch of the Leonine Kingdom.' His real name was Smith. The caravan was exhibiting in a town where I was staying on circuit. Somehow or other I picked this fellow up, found him very amusing and intelligent, and took some notice of him. What I admired in him was his patience. I'm pretty good that way myself; you could not put me out of temper, for instance, because, if I felt there was any chance of your doing so, I should go away, or go to sleep; but he would have borne it—he had perseverance as well as patience, in short. One day he was eight hours at a stretch in the den trying to teach one of the lions a trick."

"Did he succeed?"

"To be sure he did! The animal at last discovered what was required of it, and did it."

"He must have been very tired."

"He was nearly fainting with fatigue and hunger, but he told me that if he had given up then there would have been all the ground to go over afresh the next day. This led to a conversation on his mode of training, and he explained the system to me—'I always reward them and am kind to them when they do what they are told, and I am as patient as possible with them. I treat them all alike, not making favourites or showing any great kindness to them except as a reward. I never threaten, and I seldom strike, and when I do strike I only strike once.'"

"What did he strike them with?"

"A little truncheon made of steel, and heavily loaded at the top—a sort of model of a policeman's staff. He always carried it in his coat-pocket. He told me he could stun any of the beasts at one blow with it,

and that in one instance he had killed one. It was astonishing to see how the great brutes obeyed him. I have seen several lion-tamers, but I never saw one to whom the beasts were so entirely obedient. They did not crouch about as if they were afraid of the whip, nor did they snarl and growl at him behind his back, as is usually the case. They watched him attentively, as if anxious not to miss a look or sign, and did everything with an air of willingness."

"And you propose to treat children like this?"

"Similarly. I should not, of course, take a steel truncheon to them, or knock them down, but I should manage them by precisely analogous means."

"You had better open a school."

"Not I. I hate children!"

"And yet you are trying to establish a

system of training for their advantage."

"It is incidentally to their advantage, but my more immediate object is the abating of the nuisance that children are."

"Humph! that's one way of looking at it!"

"You should see my clerk. By Jove! he's a model. You might set a clock at him for punctuality. As for obedience, if I told him to go and commit a murder he'd do it; and as for saying what he has to say in the least number of words possible, why, he'd beat the best *précis*-writer under Government."

"I wish to goodness you could make Bella so obedient!"

"That is for you to do."

"Oh, yes, of course. But how?"

"Just as I have told you. Don't bluster or threaten. Take things quietly, and wait.

Be patient, and try to beat her by that; and if you don't, and the worst comes to the worst, all you can do is——"

"Knock her down with a steel truncheon."

"No, cut her off with a silver shilling, and think no more about her. But it won't come to that—I know it won't. As soon as your opposition is withdrawn she'll cease to care for this fellow. Absence will settle the question, and then in steps Lysaght, and wins."

"I hope to Heaven he may!"

"I'm determined he shall!"

"Well, that's something towards it, with your power of will, Philip. I declare you frighten me. I wouldn't have believed any one could induce me to take this girl back and consent to her folly, but here you have persuaded me into it in five minutes!"

Philip smiled, and filled his glass.

"Your will can do anything if you only keep it in proper condition by training. Have you ever seen anything of mesmerism? No? Well, you have heard of it, and I have seen something of it, and I believe it is all nothing more or less than an effort of will. I know a fellow who could mesmerise that stopper so that it would roll across the table to him when he called it."

"Nonsense!"

"Not a bit of it! I've seen it, and, what's more, I believe I could do it myself."

"Have you ever tried?"

"No."

"Why not?"

"Because if by any chance I failed I should be like Signor Smizzi with the lion. I should have to go on for eight hours or more trying to throw sufficient energy into my will to

accomplish it, and that would be waste of time as well as a wearisome job; beside, such violent volition would play the deuce with your brain."

"You're an oddity."

"I know it, but I find it answers. Eccentricity passes for genius. But had we not better join Bella? That reminds me, by the way, to beg you once more to treat her with an appearance, at all events, of your old kindness. You will smash the whole scheme if you don't. Be as jolly and indulgent to her as you used to be. Will you?

"I'll see if I can."

"That's right! Now we'll go to her."

"Won't you have another glass of port?"

"No, thanks. After your sixth glass you lose all the delicate appreciation of flavour, and might go on drinking an inferior wine without detecting it. Therefore after the

sixth glass it is as well to stop, for all beyond that is waste of stomach without gain of flavour. It's no use going on when the real enjoyment is past. Ah, if people only knew when to stop, what a world it would be! I believe the original curse inflicted for tasting the tree of knowledge was nothing more or less than this ignorance of the limits—'Quos ultra citraque nequit consistere rectum,' as old Horace says. But I suppose you have forgotten your classics?"

So saying, the young philosopher rose from the table.

What Philip said about eccentricity was the only genuine sentiment he had expressed. It was the key-note of his character, the practice to which he owed his reputation as a conversationalist and man of intellect. He was really no more than a shrewd, cold-headed logician—a man with an eminently

judicial mind, but by no means a brilliant one intellectually. But he had discovered that a tinge of peculiarity in opinion or manner often passes for something higher, and he profited by his discovery.

He studied—just as he did for his speeches at court—all sorts of abstruse and quaint theories. He was a mighty reader and an excellent digester, and his bookseller had orders to send him any publications of a crotchety or mad description that appeared. Hence he was stocked with odds and ends of eccentricity, which passed for original and obtained him credit for genius. He got up with great care all kinds of "sensation" opinions, and they stood him in good stead.

There are always two sides to a question, and when a clever talker like Philip takes the wrong even, he can find something to say for it, while his opponent, though ever

so right, will find it difficult to argue with him. And then what is the result? That opponent, conscious of having supported the right side, and of course supposing that he did so very ably, yet cannot but feel that Philip has the best of him, and has made out a strong case for his side. So he says, "Clever fellow that Charlwood—a little peculiar in his views, but uncommonly clever—splendid intellect—quite a genius!" Thus easily are reputations made.

Philip and his father joined Bella in the drawing-room. The squire contrived for a few minutes to make himself quite pleasant to his daughter, but soon, exhausted with the effort, he retired to an easy chair, where he was ere long dozing comfortably.

Bella was quite delighted at the change. To tell the truth, she had already become a little sickened of her romance. It was all

very well to talk about love in a cottage and suffering poverty with the man of her choice; but when she had, during her stay at the parsonage, to dress herself without the assistance of a lady's-maid, and in other respects to attend on herself instead of being dependent on others, she did not like it much, and was heartily glad to go back to the Manor-house.

Philip seated himself at the tea-table beside Bella and began talking about all sorts of topics, rattling on in a pleasant, cheerful sort of way until he gradually brought the conversation round to herself.

"Well, Bell, you know me too well not to feel sure that what I say and do is for your good, my child, and I have fought your battle with the old boy; but it does grieve me, though I haven't breathed a word about it to any one else, to think you have made your choice."

"Love, dear Philip, cannot be controlled."

"Quite true, my dear, and that is one reason of my trouble. Suppose you have made a mistake, and only wake up to find yourself the wife of a poor subaltern in a marching regiment, without the love that alone can support you?"

"Oh, never!"

"I hope not. But there's some one else who is broken-hearted at this, or will be when he hears of it."

"What do you mean, Philip? You're such a mysterious creature at times. Pray tell me who this wonderful person is?"

"You must not mention it again, or let him see you know it. Do you promise?"

"Oh, yes, of course."

"It is my old and dear friend Marcus Lysaght. He and I have been sworn friends from almost childhood. Many years ago,

anxious to strengthen the tie between us and become really brothers, we vowed to marry each other's sisters. The vow was very solemnly made, and we have always spoken and thought of its accomplishment as if it were certain."

"Dear me, how romantic!" said Bella, immensely interested. "It is so like Juan and Prosper in the *Brothers of Bohemia.* But hasn't Mr. Lysaght got a sister?"

Philip paused. He had not been quite prepared for this. But there was no time to lose in thinking. He gave a sigh and said—

"You must not ask about her."

"What! is there some mystery, some secret, about her?"

"My darling Bella, the secret is not mine. And when Marcus comes I beg you will make no allusion to his sisters."

"Is he coming, then?"

"Yes, before I heard of all this unhappy business, I had invited him down here to see you. It is too late now, but I could not write and put off the visit. I must break it to him as gently as possible. He will be here to-morrow."

"Dear me, how romantic!" thought Bella; "how delightful it will be!"

"She preciously nearly caught me then," thought Philip. "I must drive over and meet Marcus at Scalperton and prime him as to this affair. It will be ticklish work, but, by Jove, I must bring about the match somehow."

"I'm very curious to see Mr. Lysaght, Philip."

"He's a charming fellow, Bella. It is not every young barrister who is lucky enough to be the bosom friend and tried companion of an earl."

"An earl!"

"Yes, child, he is an earl. His father is Earl of Mountgarret, and his health is so bad that Marcus may come to the title at any hour."

"La! fancy having a real earl down here to stay with us. Wouldn't the Parmenters and the Stowell people be savage if they knew it? How long will he stay?"

"I really don't know, Bella. When I asked him I was in hopes that he would stay a long time, in order to win your heart. But now I can hardly expect or ask him to stay long. I fear he may return at once when he hears——"

"But why should he, Philip? You know—you see—I mean of course that as you are so fond of him, and would so like to have him here, you need not say anything to him about my engagement."

"That would hardly be fair to him, child, much as I should like to keep him here. And it would be awkward for you. What could you do if his attentions became marked?"

"Oh, they won't, and if they do, I can give him a hint. I know how it can be done discreetly, as Julia does it in *Belinda Blantyre, or Cupid's Chase.* Have you ever read it?"

"No! I never have time for novels. Marcus is the boy for them. He reads every one that comes out, I believe, and has a tremendous stock of them."

"La! how nice! I wonder if he would lend me some."

"He'd give you the whole lot in a moment if you asked him."

"What an agreeable man! Is he nice-looking?"

"I can't undertake to say. But he is the idol of society, invited everywhere, and quite an authority in the fashionable world."

"Oh, then he must be handsome. I know from what I have read that such favourites of society are always very handsome. There was Sir Wilfred de Waveney and—dear me, who is it, in *Fashion and Folly*?—and the Duke of Deepdene. They were all handsome."

"Well, most people think Marcus good-looking, I know. Poor fellow!" and Philip heaved a deep sigh.

In this manner Philip contrived to interest his sister in his friend. He knew the romantic side of her character, and was aware of her weaknesses. And he made such use of this knowledge that he filled her head with all sorts of romantic notions about Marcus, so much so that Bella began half to

regret that she was engaged to Edward Harding, more especially as her father had withdrawn his disapproval.

It was agreed that Bella's engagement should be kept a secret from Marcus. Philip felt that this was greatly in his favour, and quietly determined to tell his friend, and ask him as a favour to pay all attention to his sister—to flirt with her in short, in order to wean her from her folly. He was quite sure Marcus would have no objection, and he felt he might leave the rest to work itself out.

"If the worst comes to the worst, I can only tell him in the end that he has carried it rather too far, and the only reparation that he can make for trifling with her feelings will be to marry her."

And Philip chuckled to think how he was playing the puppets for his own ends.

CHAPTER X.

THE MARCH ON LUCKNOW

WHEN the gallant 203rd Berkshire Rifles landed in India they had their work cut out for them. They were not accustomed to a tropical climate, and the novelty of their duties was very unpleasant. They growled at the notion of encamping and inactivity in the day and vigorous marches in the night. But though they growled they felt there was no choice, for at midday the sun seemed to turn the atmosphere into molten metal. If a man ventured beyond the shade, which was quite hot enough, it

was like plunging into a boiling spring. So they sat in the shade, trying to doze, but inwardly fretting because they seemed to be wasting precious time, instead of pressing onward to the rescue of their imperilled countrymen and countrywomen.

"Why don't you smoke?" said a grey-headed old major to Edward, who was tossing about on his rug in the tent.

"I can't; because if I smoke I think," said Ted, "and then I get fancying that just at the moment when I am idly puffing out a whiff of smoke some fiendish Pandy is cutting down some brave chap or other, or murdering some helpless woman or child. I can't smoke!"

"My boy, it's no use fretting. I know the climate, and we do our friends most service by not pressing on too rashly. Remember we have more than one thing to think

of. If we went madly forward we should at last stumble towards the enemy, too weak and worn to do more than add to the number of victims, and, what is most necessary, and best for the safety of all, is that the prestige of our fellows should not be injured. Every handful that gets a repulse because it has been pressed on to the scene of action too quickly adds three times its own number to the enemy in the encouragement it gives."

"True, very true!" groaned Ted, but he could not feel a bit more at ease. Truth is not always comforting, because Hope and Fear are stronger.

So the fierce sun blazed across the sky like the cruel torch of war, and sank in blood-red clouds in the west. And after the brief twilight the 203rd pushed forward again. What weary marches they were,

through tangled jungles and swamps, canopied by darkness, or lit by the uncertain rays of a moon that had to struggle with heavy mists! At times a frightened tiger would bound away before the head of the column, or a huge snake would writhe across the path; or there was a stampede of buffaloes, or even the crash of a terrified troop of wild elephants.

At times some native was taken red-handed, and shot down like a wild beast; or some escaping white was picked up or brought in by Hindoos, who were still faithful to their ancient masters, and who were rewarded for their fidelity.

The regiment was on the march to join the reinforcements intended for the second relief of Lucknow, and, in spite of the seeming delay, inevitable on account of the day halts, was pressing forward rapidly. In-

deed, the fatigue was so great, and the distances traversed so long, that the soldiers would have become disorganised, and might even have mutinied under any other circumstances than those which dictated such despatch. They knew they were going to succour their brothers and sisters from the leaguering fiends, and each man struggled on without a murmur. If any soldier ever felt his pluck failing, or his determination relaxing, he said to himself, "Cawnpore!" and that was like a mighty cordial.

If the mutineers stop to cross bayonets with these dogged, fierce men, there will be small quarter given. All the devil of the English soldier's disposition is up in arms, and ferocity will requite ferocity sternly and mercilessly.

In this spirit they keep on sturdily over long stretches of arid plain and thick jungle

and morass, until they strike upon a stream, along the banks of which they push forward. This stream is but a slender thread of water now, but the ravine, or nullah, through which it flows shows that in winter it is a fierce and mighty torrent, filling the gully to its top. The sides are steep, and clothed with rank vegetation that springs up in summer, to be torn up and washed away in the storms of winter. It is a wide ravine in parts, in others so narrow you might converse easily with any one on the opposite crest.

As the 203rd is preparing to halt in the dawn of morning on the left bank of this nullah, at a point where it slopes more than usual, so as to afford easy access to the water, a body of cavalry is seen coming along the further bank. There is no doubt about what they are—only English

horse could come at such a pace in such order. The Pandies would be careering along like a flight of pigeons, not massed together like a cloud.

When they come nearer, Edward Harding, who is watching them, recognises the well-known uniform of the 8th Dragoon Guards. It is the last regiment in the service that retains the bit of tiger-skin on the helmet. Imagine Ted's delight at the prospect of meeting Tom Martindale! He jumps up, picks up his revolver by instinct —it isn't safe to venture far alone unless you are well armed—and proceeds to descend the side of the nullah. Though not precipitous, it is still so steep that he descends at a slope sideways in the direction of the advancing horse.

Without a thought of danger Ted strides along, now swinging down a declivity, now

leaping across a chasm. All at once, in jumping from a higher ledge to a lower, he springs almost into the arms of a Hindoo in tattered European uniform, evidently a revolted Sepoy. This fellow has been following the regiment for days to cut off stragglers, with the crafty, patient cruelty of one of the tigers of his country. Just now, as he was stealing along the bed of the stream, chuckling inwardly to think that some of the unbelievers would be sure to come down to the water alone and so fall into his hands, he heard the jingle of accoutrements and the dull beat of many hoofs on the dry reverberating ground. So he crawled a little way up the bank and listened, and is listening so intently that he doesn't notice Ted's coming until he is almost upon him.

The place on which the two meet and grapple is a little platform of rock not at all

adapted for a struggle. Ted, besides, is at a disadvantage, for the impetus of his leap carries him forward, while his foe, leaping nimbly on one side, closes on him and pushes him towards the edge, whence there is an ugly drop—ugly not so much on account of its height as because there are nasty jagged rocks and stumps of uprooted trees below.

The Pandy has his back to the bank; Ted is unable to hold his ground, so he loosens his grip of his enemy, draws his revolver, and fires at him, but the other strikes up his arm, and, taking advantage of Ted's having loosed a hold that might have dragged him over too, thrust him over the ledge with the butt of his gun. Luckily for Ted the quarters are so close, or he might be bayoneted. As it is, he falls headlong from the ledge, a long train of thought

flashes through his brain like a spark of electricity, and then there is a dull crash and a gleam of a thousand stars, and he is lying all of a heap among the boughs of a fallen tamarisk.

But the discharge of Ted's pistol has attracted the notice of some of the men who were on the top of the bank. With a shout like the cry of dogs let loose at a wild beast they come bounding down the side. Master Pandy, who is just about to descend and finish his prostrate foe, looks round and thinks better of it. He steals off rapidly among the scrub, but the men are too quick for him—they track him by the stir of the bushes. An officer on the bank above, who is a keen sportsman, cheers them on as if they were a pack of terriers after an otter, for like an otter Pandy is making for the stream. He reaches it, but at the shallows;

there is no pool wherein he can dive, and before he has time to think again they are on him. He turns, makes one wild lunge with his bayonet, and then six glittering blades are plunged savagely into him all at once, and down he goes half in the water, half on the land, and there dies, writhing in the mire, while the men stand over him grinding their teeth and shaking their fists at him, but, now that he is down, not touching him again.

In the meantime, half-a-dozen others have scrambled down to Ted, and have extricated him from his uncomfortable position. He is stunned a little and shaken, and has cut his head on a stone, but there are no bones broken. So as soon as he has found his revolver and reloaded, he sets out to scramble over the stream and climb the other bank. The Dragoon Guards came up

in time to see the hunt of the skulking sepoy, and have halted, and the officers welcomed Ted, who, without any further adventures, arrives at the top a little out of breath.

"Hullo! much hurt?" asks a young Captain, who has drawn up near the brow of the slope.

"Oh no! not at all," says Ted, though the blood has flowed freely from his hurt.

"Is it a sword-cut?"

"No—the beggar tumbled me over, and I fell on a sharp stone."

"Well, he won't push you again, I fancy, for I saw six of your chaps make a pretty decent sieve of him."

"I'm glad to hear it. But can you tell me, is Martindale with you?"

"No, he isn't—stop, though—you're Harding of the Berkshire, I suppose?"

"Yes, I am!"

"I thought so by your asking for him. I have often heard him speak of you. He has sold out of ours and gone into the Line."

"You don't know what regiment, I suppose?"

"No, I don't, for it wasn't decided—he talked even of a native regiment, but that was only gammon."

"But how was it he left the 8th?"

"It's a long story, but as you won't mind hearing it, being his friend, I'll tell you. We're going to halt here, I see, so we'll go and smoke a weed under that group of palms if you like."

"By all means. I'm most anxious to hear about Tom."

"So you shall, but if you'll take my advice, you'll let Barker, our surgeon, wash and strap that cut first."

"Oh, it's nothing."

"Yes, but even nothing, in this climate, is not a wise thing to leave unprotected. The sun and the flies would play the deuce with that cut in an hour."

Ted submitted with tolerable grace to his first bit of army surgery, and then joined his new friend in the shade of the trees. Some horse-cloths and skins were heaped together for lounges, and an awning was suspended between the trunks of four of the palms, making an airy and cool shelter from the heat, which was already beginning to make itself felt.

"Glad to see you properly patched up," said the Captain, producing a brandy flask. "Here, some of you chaps, go down and fetch some water; and hi! look here; just take it from the stream above where that Pandy is lying, for I have no desire to drink

my foeman's blood—nor have you, I suppose, Harding?"

"Anything but that!"

"Well, sit down there—and here's a weed. Help yourself to brandy; they won't be long with the water."

When they were at last comfortably settled down with their brandy-pawnee and cheroots, Edward reminded the Captain of his promise to tell him about Tom Martindale.

"Poor Tom!" said the captain. "To be sure I'll tell you. He married against his governor's wishes. Now the old gentleman wasn't a bad sort of fellow, only he was dreadfully fond of appearing like a swell of good family. He wasn't, you know; but he thought his position as under-secretary was sufficient to warrant the assumption, and he had made up his mind to marry Tom to

some girl of good family—and he might have done it too, for there are lots of 'em in the market, and an under-sec. at the Ordnance Office—in spite of the shindies and scrapes it has got into—is in a good position to bid. Well, Tom didn't see things in the same light, and—as I suppose you know—married a poor girl, a governess, I believe."

"Yes! I knew her and was present at her marriage. In fact, my own brother married them. But his father knew of it, though he didn't approve."

"Quite so. But he behaved very stupidly afterwards. He had better have forbidden it at first when the evil was reparable—it was no use kicking against destiny when it was too late to alter matters. When Tom and his wife went up to town the old boy tried a very silly game. He would always

be too delighted to see his son, he said, but he did not wish to form the acquaintance of his wife."

"By Jove! Tom wouldn't stand that, I fancy."

"He didn't. He told the governor that he must decline to have anything to do with those who would not recognise Mrs. Martindale, and then—for the first time in their lives, I believe—the father and son quarrelled and parted."

"I'm really grieved to hear it. The affection on both sides was so very warm. They were more like brothers than father and son. It will be a great sorrow to Tom."

"It will be greater to his father, who will be in perpetual anxiety about Tom—fearful of hearing every mail of some calamity."

"Is he in India, then?"

"Oh yes, I believe so. He declined to

accept any further aid from his father, and sold his commission in ours, which is rather an expensive regiment. But as we were daily expecting orders to sail for India, Tom fancied the reason of his retirement might be misunderstood, and he told me that he was determined to join some regiment that was under orders for the scene of the mutiny. I haven't heard anything of him since, but you know Tom well enough to be sure he kept his determination."

"Poor Tom! of course he would. But his wife—was she to go with him, I wonder?"

"Oh, I think so. He didn't speak of her as if he were going to leave her behind."

"I'm afraid she was hardly strong enough to go campaigning with him. Well! Old Martindale was very kind indeed to me, but, hang it all, I could punch his stupid old

head. What the deuce did he mean by behaving in such a childish way?"

"There's some excuse for him—not to mention that he most likely suffers acutely for it. You see he was not quite received on an equal footing by the swells, and he was anxious that his son should enter society on better terms:—it was, in fact, that fruitful cause of half the miseries in this world—the honour of the family."

"Yes; but he should have been above it."

"Nobody is. Here am I sent over here to swelter in a heavy dragoon's togs in a bearskin saddle because I fell in love with my tutor's niece. There was nothing serious about it—it would have worn itself out in a week after I went up to Oxford. But my good mother was in such alarm about it that she actually got my uncle, who is colonel of the regiment, to procure me a com-

mission in it because it was going abroad."

"I daresay she is rather unhappy about what she has done now."

"Rather! I believe you. Why, as soon as she learnt our destination, she wrote me such a letter! I verily think I might have married all my tutor's nieces at once, and she wouldn't have murmured. But you're not smoking—take another cheroot."

"No, thanks: not just yet. But I'll help myself to a little more cold pale, if you'll allow me."

In this way Ted and the captain chatted and lounged away the morning. At last Ted began to subside a little.

"You're tired," said the captain. "That crack on the head has weakened you a bit."

"I do feel drowsy, and, I daresay, from the loss of blood and the shake."

"Lean back on the rugs, then, and take

a siesta. I'll wake you when the bugle blows."

In about a quarter of an hour Edward was fast asleep. He dreamt he was going down the nullah again, and that a sepoy jumped up before him, that he had a struggle with him and shot him; but that when he threw him into the stream he turned into Tom Martindale, who said he had turned sepoy because his father wouldn't let him marry.

So Ted rested and slumbered all that afternoon, for he had been knocked up with forced marches, and his fall and the blow on his head had weakened him.

As the shades of evening were beginning to gather rapidly, his friend shook him. Ted jumped up at once and felt for his revolver.

"Don't shoot—I'll come down," said the

other, laughing. "It's the first bugle, and your chaps are on the move."

So Ted, by this time thoroughly awake, shook hands with his friend and wished him good-bye. And then he crossed the nullah again, and rejoined the 203rd Berkshire Rifles.

CHAPTER XI.

A LOYAL NATIVE REGIMENT.

THE 120th Regiment of Bombay Native Infantry is quartered at Ungawallah, and all confidence is reposed in it, for about three weeks ago some emissaries who came from the mutineers at Chillabagh, with the intention of inciting the men to revolt, were seized by them and delivered up to the authorities. Still it is felt that it would be a poor reward for this fidelity to call on them to go and act in the field against their misguided fellow-countrymen. So there is tranquillity at Ungawallah, except that the British officers there would like to be up and

doing, for fresh tales of butchery, treachery, and brutality are coming in every day.

There is quite a little colony of ladies here; for as soon as it was discovered that the 120th could be trusted, officers in stations close by sent their wives to Ungawallah, they themselves remaining among the men who might be let loose at any moment upon them.

But though there was tranquillity at Ungawallah, it was only skin-deep; for in spite of the strong marks of loyalty which the 120th had displayed, there were a few men among the officers—men who had been long among the natives—who did not scruple to express their fears about the real sentiments of the regiment. But they met with a fierce opponent in the colonel, an old and experienced officer.

"By gad, sir!" said the colonel to these

objectors and doubters, singly and severally —"by gad, sir! you don't deserve to hold a commission in the regiment, by gad! They come out of it like silver—silver three times thingumbob'd—ask Mr. Collympton, the chaplain, what it is. By gad, sir! I'm proud of 'em—proud of 'em. Why I've been with 'em for years, and know every chap in the regiment, and by gad, sir! they're as true as steel!"

The colonel spoke no more than was true—he had commanded the regiment for years, and knew his men by name. He was very popular, too, though he sprinkled his conversation plentifully with an expression which I, taking a leaf out of the book of algebraists, represent by the term, "By gad, sir!"

The colonel reported so favourably of his men, and the men behaved so well—not a

single spy ventured to approach the station, and even the bazaar scamps hooted the men as they passed them—that two recommendations he represented very strongly were attended to.

In the centre of Ungawallah there was a very strong fort—a native fort, erected on a rocky knoll that towered above the town, from which it was approached by a winding path commanded by the guns of the fort. A river ran under the fort in the rear, but the rocks were so precipitous that an ascent that way had never been attempted, though stores could be slung up by a crane.

The colonel's first proposal was that his regiment, as a reward for its fidelity, should not be sent into the field. Such of the officers as could be spared might act with other regiments, but the 120th should hold Ungawallah on the defensive, and that all

the powder in the magazines at suspected stations should be secretly withdrawn and sent to the fortress—a sufficient supply being left for the Europeans at such places.

These recommendations, I have said, were attended to. From Chillabagh and Maharabad large supplies of powder were despatched by night in bullock-carts. A European rode by the side of each native driver with a revolver ready-cocked to blow out his brains if he gave the alarm. Another station, Kolaghur, a little further up the river, despatched a large quantity of ammunition and some light guns by water.

The Kolaghur stores arrived first, and were hauled up into the fort by the Europeans—it having been determined, at the suggestion of the suspicious, and against the wishes of the colonel, that no natives should be permitted to enter the fort.

The Kolaghur stores, however, were barely got in, and the boats were hardly round the turn of the river, ere the powder-carts from Chillabah and Maharabad hove in sight. The Europeans in the fort had barely bidden adieu to the brave fellows who were going back in those boats to almost a certainty of massacre when the bullock-cart escort rode in, weary and hungry, and sick at heart with watching and anxiety.

The carts are received into the lines, and the new-comers sat down for the first time for many weeks to an undisturbed and comfortable meal. The colonel was in great feather, and "by gad"-ed without ceasing, and the dinner passed off splendidly.

One of the "bullock-cart escort," as the officers of the 120th styled the new-comers, is a Civil servant, Mr. Thomas Friston. He happens to sit opposite to an officer of the

native regiment. He looks at him for a long time, and at last, bending over him with a quiet chuckle, says—

"Whereupon 'Time in the bows there! Keep your eyes on Two's back and go well forward over your toes,' said Mr. William Kingston, of Denb. Coll."

"By Jove! what?—why, yes, of course, Tom Friston!" says the other.

"I thought I knew you Martindale," says Friston, and then they shake hands.

And I need hardly tell you that when two old college chums meet they have plenty to say, so the two Toms fall into deep conversation and go over old times again. Tom Martindale learns for the first time that a very naughty practical joke which he and Ted played, when they felt a disinclination one night for chapel, the next morning had been a success. They had most irreligiously

filled the keyhole of the outer door with bread-crumbs, and (though they took that trouble in order to avoid the trouble of getting up to chapel) were up with the earliest to see the success of their plan, and were surprised to find the door open.

Friston had been up later than Tom, and had learned from the porter that, but for his having discovered the mischief in time to send for a locksmith, Denbigh would for once have had to dispense with that very reverent morning service which was dashed off in about a quarter of an hour.

"By Jove! won't I tell Ted when I see him!" said Tom; whereon Friston inquired about Ted. In this way the conversation went on, the circles from it widening (like the rings on the surface of a pond where a stone has been flung) until they reached the shore of the remote past.

Tom and Friston were walking outside the mess-tent now, smoking their cigars. All at once a slender snake-like flame leaped into the air from a bungalow near the lines. It flickered a second, and then died out.

"Hullo," said Tom Martindale, "there's a fire!"

"A fire!" said the other; "then Heaven help us, for it's all over!"

"What do you mean?" saked Tom.

But as he spoke, the whole line of bungalows—the officers' quarters—burst into flame. There came a shout, too—a shout of triumph.

"They've mutinied!" said Friston.

"Mutinied be hanged!" said a voice close by. "Be gad, sir, it's the bazaar thieves"

"I fear, not, colonel."

"Come on to the men at once, boys," said the old officer cheerfully, for he could not

believe his regiment had proved false.

There was hasty mounting and rapid riding, and then they reached the lines. The colonel ordered the call to the parade-ground. But very few, comparatively, of the men obeyed. The others might, however, thought the colonel, be engaged in extinguishing the fire. The light of the flames was so strong that the parade-ground was brilliantly illuminated. There was the little group of Europeans, and before them the knot of sepoys, and on the right the line of blazing bungalows surrounded by a yelling mob.

"Thank God," said one of the sceptics, "the women are safe in the fort!"

"They haven't unharnessed the bullocks from some of the carts, colonel. Let's make a dash for them and carry them off to the fort."

The line of waggons lay to the left between both parties and the fort. The mutineers had left the bullocks in the waggons in order that supplies of ammunition might be at once sent on to the rebel camps in the vicinity.

The old colonel did not speak—he could not believe his eyes. At last he rode towards the men. A warning voice made him halt. He pulled up for a moment to address them, appealing to his long connection with them and the good character they had lately earned. He begged them to lay down their arms and return to their duty. They did not answer him, but the same voice warned him off. He reined up again and turned to the group of Europeans.

"Gentlemen," he said in a clear voice, "I fear I am little better than your murderer. I have put implicit confidence in

my men, and they have deceived me. I shall make one more effort to preserve you; if I fail, by gad! gentlemen, you must look out, each for himself."

They did not altogether understand his purpose, but it was very clear soon. He walked his horse up to the mutineers. They shouted to him to halt.

"It is I who have commanded you hitherto—I'm not going to change the plan now," he murmured, and then added aloud, "We have served together many years, my men, and I have never doubted your loyalty. I won't do it now."

"Go back—go back, or we shall fire!" was the answer.

"I can't go back; fire if you like, for, by gad, I'd rather die than live after I have been deceived in you."

At that several of the muzzles pointed at

him wavered, and one or two dropped. He thought there was hope in that, as he walked his horse calmly up to the troops. Then there came a sudden flash and a report, and he pressed his hand to his heart, turned to his officers, waved his hand, and fell headlong from the saddle—dead!

And then the Sepoys rushed on him, and thrust their bayonets into the lifeless corpse.

"Turn, and bolt for the fort!" said Friston; "they've tasted blood. Carry off what powder-waggons you can."

They turned and set spurs to their horses, and one or two, as they passed, caught the leading-ropes of the bullocks and dragged them along. The Sepoys, seeing this, advanced, their numbers increasing rapidly every instant, for the report of the shot that killed the colonel brought them from the burning houses.

The bullocks were slow and weary, and in a few moments the flying group would have been overtaken. But Tom Martindale, who had been the last to turn—for he didn't like to leave the old soldier's body on the ground—was equal to the emergency. When he reached the powder-waggons all the Europeans had passed them, and were goading the oxen on. The waggons, from which the bullocks had been detached, were standing in a row. Riding up to the nearest, he flung up the lid, and, thrusting his revolver up to the lock into a barrel, which chanced apparently to have been opened by the mutineers, he shouted in Hindoostanee —"You murdering hounds, if any one of you comes a step nearer, by God, I'll blow us all up!"

And in this way he held them at bay till the ammunition had reached the fort, and

then he turned round and galloped thither himself at steeple-chase pace, with the bullets whistling round him. But he reached the shelter of the fort in safety.

Without any loss of time they proceeded to put the fort into a state of defence. The light guns from Kolaghur were got into position so as to command the approach. Watches were made up, and the ladies were set to work making cartridges, or took lessons in loading muskets. One of the bullock-train escort was an engineer, so he was appointed inspector of the defences, and examined the place carefully from roof to basement.

His report was favourable except in one respect. The base of the fortress was excavated in the rock, and from the size of the excavations and the nature of the stone, it seemed to him that it would not be impos-

sible to undermine it; but they hoped and believed none of the Sepoys had seen this portion of the interior.

Then, when the guards had been placed, and all their preparations made against surprise or assault, they sat down to talk over their position, past, present, and future.

It was impossible to decide when the treachery of the Sepoys began, whether their giving up the emissaries of the mutineers at Chillabagh was genuine, or merely done to lull suspicion. It was evident that of late they had only been waiting to obtain possession of the ammunition to break into open rebellion.

Everbody regretted the poor old colonel's loss, though it was impossible not to feel that his over-confidence had given the mutineers their opportunity,—if it had not been the fatal temptation which seduced them. But

he had died so courageously, and had attempted to save others at the risk of his own life, and they all felt it, and mourned for him.

Tom Martindale, too, came in for a share of praise, and undoubtedly deserved it, for, but for the check he had given to the mutineers, pursuers and pursued would probably have rushed into the fort together, and then all would have been lost. In consideration of this gallantry, Tom was appointed chief officer of the guard, his duties being to station sentinels, make the rounds, and keep on the watch for mining or any attempt to carry the fort by stratagem or assault.

All that night the sky was red with the fires of the European residences in the neighbourhood, and there were riot and rapine triumphant in Ungawallah. But the wretches seemed satisfied for the present

with the destruction of property and with robbery, and did not come near the fort, from the ramparts of which so many anxious eyes were peering into the darkness, where so many ears were on the alert to hear the tramp of the attacking force, and where brows were knit and teeth were set, and weapons were griped with angry grasp, till the muscles rose like ropes. For these were Englishmen at bay, and defending their wives and sisters from death—and worse than death.

In one of the chambers in the basement of the fort sat poor Mary Martindale nursing her firstborn. She was a brave little soul and an enduring, but she trembled now, for there was nothing save these old walls between men worse than wild beasts and her child—her first darling. Baby had been born soon after the vessel sailed. Tom call-

ed him "the sturdy Stepneyite," because the captain of the transport told him that all children born at sea of English parents could claim a settlement in that parish. Baby was an endless sort of delight to his mother, who did not seem to feel how long and weary the journey was, and who faced the fatigues and troubles of India boldly, supported by her worship of this infant.

How unconscious of peril and how beautiful he was as he lay in her arms! He was a bonny lad—a true English baby, though he had been borne on the high seas. And he was so like Tom, she thought, with the same eyes and hair, though Tom would have it the boy was more like her. Only a week ago they had sat on the ramparts in the quiet beginning of night, and playfully quarrelled about the babe's likeness; and now here was

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attacking the fort, but neither did they show any disposition to march off.

Towards evening the hope that they might leave Uugawallah was destroyed. Preparations were made for the reception of another regiment on the parade-ground, and by dusk it marched into the lines and pitched its tents.

Another long night of watching, but still no attempt was made to storm. The little garrison held a council of war. It was suggested that this inactivity was assumed to throw the sentries off their guard, and that when they had by security grown less vigilant, an attack would be tried. Others, however, fancied the intention was to starve them out, which was not at all an impossible thing to do, though the stores were by no means short.

In the meantime at intervals heavy can-

nonading was heard far off, but whether it heralded the success of the British or of the mutineers they could not learn. At times a single Sepoy would approach the place, and survey it attentively, as if to see if anything had occurred. He was generally made a mark of by half the garrison, who blazed at him until the firing began to get his range, when he would disappear.

They had not been besieged in this way long before sickness made its appearance. The little garrison was sadly weakened by this, and had the Sepoys made an attack now they must have carried the place. How grateful the poor fellows were that the enemy apparently lacked courage to attack! They little guessed the real reason of this seeming apathy.

But they were fated to discover it soon.

Wearily the days crawled by, the two par-

ties gazing idly at each other. The mutineers gave themselves up to riot and debauchery, as if they were quite sure of those in the fort, and could take them whenever it was necessary. Before long the beleaguered garrison found that their fresh stores were at an end, and only rice and preserved meats were left. It became necessary to serve out provisions by allowance—and that a small one. With regard to ammunition, they were pretty well supplied. Powder they had in plenty, and they employed all their leisure time in casting bullets. Anything that chanced to be of metal—down to the olbata spoons of Mrs. Major Mahoney—was cut into slugs for an old-fashioned piece of ordnance mounted on the wall overlooking the gate of the fort.

In the meantime the besieging force is daily swelled by small straggling parties of

natives—some of them deserters from Sepoy regiments, others disaffected men who did not belong to the Indian army. Anxious eyes are bent towards the camp every day from the fort, for it is feared that artillery may possibly be waited for by the mutineers. The old fort is strong, but it is very doubtful whether, having been left in bad repair so long, it would resist a cannonade.

But no guns make their appearance, and the Europeans feel reassured, though there is something ominous in the inactivity of the Sepoys. The oldest heads in the fort shake sadly, and the most experienced eyes are ever bent on the camp, noting every stir. "There is mischief brewing," say the wise ones, and they are right.

And still, each on the alert, but neither making any show of activity either in the attack or the defence, the two parties stood at bay.

Day after day for a week the engineer made his inspection and reported all secure. Day after day they watched the tents of the mutineers and saw no sign of danger. Day after day they mounted guard, and kept all prepared for the struggle which was so imminent—and yet so distant, it seemed.

Night after night for a week Tom Martindale appointed his guards and went his rounds. And then he would creep down to comfort his wife and peep at his sleeping boy. It was his one glimpse of cheer during the day, for constant watching and anxiety had begun to tell on him. He was terribly tired, and pale, and thin, so his wife made him rest awhile, tucking him up with shawls on an easy-chair, and letting him have a nap.

One night, startled by a sudden stir of his, Mary looked up, and saw Tom looking very white and scared.

"What is it, Tom?"

"Hark! Can't you hear anything?"

"No, nothing!"

"Nonsense, Mary!—not hear a grating!"

"Oh, that! Law, I've heard that for two or three days! It is the rats."

"The what?"

"The rats!"

"It is the mutineers working in their mines within a few yards of this cave!"

CHAPTER XII.

PROSPECTS OF SPORT.

THE night after her conversation with her brother was spent by Bella in dreams —not of poor Ted toiling along under an Indian sun, but of an imaginary Irish earl, who had shamrocks instead of pearls on his coronet, and who laid that uncomfortable head-gear at her feet, together with his heart, hand, and those other *et cœteras* which are supposed to be offered up by a noble swell to the object, if not of his affections, at least of his intentions.

It was a restless night for Bella, because something—let us hope it was her con-

science, or some other better angel—would not let her dream such dreams quite peacefully. She tossed and turned on her pillow all night, and in the morning, despite the fact that her dreams had been bright with coronets, she found her pillow wet with tears.

As for Philip, he slept the sleep of the unjust, which is, I suppose, a very calm and sweet sleep, judging from the fact that rather more than half the world go to bed at a reasonable hour, and do not unite to form a Sit-up-all-night Association.

It was one of the beauties of Philip's orderly nature that he could go to sleep when and where he liked. I believe the secret of it consisted in his thinking of business whenever he desired to sink promptly into the arms of Morpheus. He began to argue the case of Spidge *v.* Patterby if he

felt restless, and the quiet flow of thought floated him into dreamland. The secret is one worth knowing, for I hold it to be an unfailing cure for sleeplessness. Mind, I don't say that you're to bother yourself about your little pecuniary difficulties or your family troubles; not a bit of it—that's not business. Only just get into the old mill and go round, and you'll doze off directly. If you're a barrister, like Philip, argue a case—if you are of a literary turn, like an unfortunate friend *I* have, try and think out the plot of a novel—if you are a baker, begin to think of the next batch of rolls—and so on through all the handicrafts. And if my recipe doesn't set you off to sleep in ten minutes I shall be greatly astonished.

Philip was not fool enough when once he had retired to rest to bother himself about the possible result of his little scheme with

regard to Bella and Marcus. He quietly settled down to the case of Spidge *v.* Patterby, which was a question of right of way. Spidge was the happy possessor of a farm, and Patterby was the happy possessor of a strip of land that intersected Spidge's fields. Spidge avowed that the immemorial Spidges had pounded through the mediæval wheat of a long line of Patterbys in order to milk the primæval cows which were their (the immemorial Spidges') property. On the other hand, Patterby alleged that the early Spidges had been guilty of trespass, and had always made those lacteal transgressions in despite of warning and resistance, and that therefore no right had been established; but, on the contrary, the Spidges, having been ignominiously driven with blows from the strip of land in the occupancy of the Patterby ancestry, had, by not seeking a redress at

law, admitted that they were in the wrong.

But we are keeping Philip awake in the most unreasonable manner by this long description. He had only got so far in the case as "My lud, and gentlemen of the jury, this is a question of right of way arising between the occupiers of a certain messuage," when he fell into a sound and refreshing slumber. While poor Bella was dreaming of coronets he was snoring in happy unconsciousness. How much better it is, then, to be a young rising and popular barrister than a romantic young lady who is not off with the old love, and hasn't yet seen the new!

The night went its way quietly. It did not loiter because Philip was sleeping so quietly, nor did it hasten away in order to shorten Bella's disturbed slumbers. The moon sailed on its way calmly, and the stars watched her down the sky, and then by-and-

by saw a silver haze gathering in the east. Presently the silver glowed into gold, and a warm tremulous stir in the air told of the rising sun. The birds began to twitter and chirp inquiringly—perhaps asking one another about the exact hour when the first worm would be due. The lark, not being immediately interested in the question, shook the dew out of his feathers, and went up to get the earliest glimpse of that devotion of his, the sun, whom he greets first at morn, and takes the latest sobbing adieu of at night. When he had finished matins he came down again, and became interested in worms, like every other respectable bird—you see, even a poet has a family to keep and ought not to neglect his domestic duties.

Philip rose soon after the lark. He made no attempt to soar upward, like that holy-minded little bird. He unlocked his port-

manteau, and took out his dressing-case. From that he extracted a little morocco box which contained six razors. A Sabbatarian must have conceived the lovely design of arranging this pleasant series of scrapers, with one for every day in a week except Sunday. Philip chose the Thursday razor —the day was engraved on the back of the implement—and proceeded to take off the stubble. Philip was one of your artistic barristers, who, seeing the fitness of things, never grow moustache, beard, or whiskers, to interfere with the effect of the wig. Such a system had the additional advantage of making Philip seem quite a lad, and in his wig he was really imposing.

This sacrifice of his personal comfort to the exigencies of his professional appearance, made Philip's early rising a source of real agony to him. The tender chin, accus-

tomed to the firm and delicate treatment of a first-rate barber residing near the Temple, felt the strong difference between cold and hot water for the operation, no less than the difference between a sharp razor and a sharpened bit of barrel-hoop, such as this blade appeared in unaccustomed hands.

But by-and-by the operation was accomplished, and Philip went down to the stables and ordered the groom to put the chestnut mare in the dog-cart and bring it round in about half-an-hour. Then he went indoors and had his breakfast, a cup of chocolate and some dry toast. By the time he had finished that frugal repast the chestnut mare was pawing the gravel at the front door, so he lit a cigar and mounted the box. In a few minutes he was spinning along towards Scalperton at about six miles an hour. The squire had a nice stud, and the chestnut was the

cream of it, if I may be allowed the expression.

Philip was at the station a few minutes before Marcus's train was due. The station-master walked up to him and touched his cap.

"Good morning, Holliday." said Philip.

"Good morning, sir. A cold morning for a drive from Bremning. Here's a telegram for you, sir," and Mr. Holliday handed Philip one of the ordinary slips of inferior paper whereon was scrawled in that usual misspelt and illegible hand which seems common to all telegraph clerks, "M. Lysaght, London, to Philip Charlwood, Railway Station, Scalperton. Missed train. Shall come by the next leaving town. Don't keep carriage waiting for me. I'll fly."

"Fly!" said Philip to himself; "not you, my boy! You'll no more fly than the

founder of the family of the penguins, who, if Darwin be right, was such an indolent bird that he lost his wings from sheer neglect to exercise them. But I suppose your notion of flying is travelling at about three miles an hour in a box on four wheels and drawn by a hired horse." And Philip laughed at his own joke.

It was one of the weakest points in Philip's character that he always enjoyed and repeated his *bon-mots*. It was a fault born of inordinate vanity and self-confidence. When he was on circuit he used to bore the men terribly with—"I said rather a good thing to Thingumbob the other day," or "Did you hear my joke about Whatshisname?" His forensic brothers christened him, "Charlwood's Echo," which was rather severe—but he didn't mind it. He was too self-satisfied not to be good-tempered.

"I'll wait for the old boy, though," he continued, musing—"I'll wait if he doesn't come till midnight," which sounded very like warmth of affection, but was not entirely that. It was necessary, as my readers will remember, that Philip should have time to prime his friend before he introduced him to the domestic circle at Bremning Minor.

He has an hour and a half to wait for the next train from town, so he jumps into the dog-cart and drives to Scalperton, which is about half a mile from the station. He puts up at the Babryngton Arms and has a little lunch, and then plays a game at billiards with the marker. He is remarkably fond of billiards is Philip, and so he kills the time pleasantly enough until the waiter comes to tell him the dog-cart is ready and the train due in about ten minutes.

"Hang it! I hope he hasn't missed this

train too," says Philip, pulling up at the door of the station, as the long snakelike string of carriages comes gliding under the bridge to the platform.

He hasn't missed this train. In a few minutes he is observed getting out of a first-class compartment, and Philip goes up and shakes hands.

"Well, old boy, how are you? I was really surprised at a man of your punctuality missing the train."

"How are you, Philip? Come, none of your chaff. It was the cabman's fault—couldn't get him to push along—told him he'd better tie his horse up behind a 'bus as it would help him on, and he turned sulky, But, hullo! I must look after my luggage, or it will be going to the deuce, or where-ever the terminus of this confounded line may happen to be."

So they go to the luggage-van, and Marcus identifies his property—a portmanteau, a dressing-case, and a gun-case. The sight of this last reminds him of one object of his visit.

"Had any shooting yet, Phil?"

"No, not yet. I left it till you came down."

"How are the birds?"

"Meaker says there are lots of coveys, and they haven't been disturbed at all, so we shall have good sport."

"Hooray! But I say, Phil, I hope the country isn't very heavy. I hate making a business of pleasure."

"You lazy beggar! But it's not bad country—and if you don't like it we can always tie a few by the leg on the lawn for you."

"You be hanged with your impudence!"

"Impudence? Why, I was only proposing a battue, which is a system specially adapted for men of your active disposition."

"Look out, Phil! I'm not your equal at chaff, but I could knock your head off in two seconds if I tried."

In this way the two friends bantered each other until the luggage had been placed in the cart; they took their seats, and drove off. Then Philip opened a more serious conversation.

"I say, Marcus, old boy, I want you to do me a kindness."

"With pleasure, Phil."

"Well, you see when I came down here I found a pretty row on. I'd had some intimation of it, which was the reason I didn't ask you to come down with me. The governor and my sister had had a serious quarrel, and I had to make it up. It seems some

brother of the parson at Bremming, a poor devil without any money, and a mere nobody, has been making a fool of her. She never sees a soul down here, and I daresay his attentions were pleasant, and the governor kicked up a row, which only made matters worse, for a woman, not to speak it profanely, is not unlike a pig—attempt to drive her one way and she bolts in directly the opposite direction!"

"This from Philip Charlwood, the mirror of chivalry!"

"Hang the mirror of chivalry! one must speak the truth sometimes."

"As a lawyer, Phil, you must find the change quite refreshing."

"Do be serious, old boy, for a few minutes."

"I'm attention itself."

"Let's see, where was I?—oh, about the

quarrel. Well, she went off to the parson's in a huff, and I had to fetch her back. Now, what I want you to do is this—I want you to pay just the ordinary attentions a gentleman pays to every lady. She is not used to that sort of thing, and without committing yourself you might do a real service by curing her of her nonsense."

"I shall be delighted, old fellow. Shall I punch the chap's head for you?"

"Well, you boasted of your science just now, so if that will enable you to punch the head of a fellow who is serving in India at this moment, you may do it."

"A soldier, eh?"

"Yes. I don't know how he got his commission; he's in the Line."

"Oh, there were lots of commissions going begging during the war. My cousin was in a cavalry regiment that used to be a

crack one before the war, but it got swamped with all sorts of odd fellows then, and it will be years before it recovers its prestige—used to be one of the most expensive messes in the service—champagne opened every day. But go on."

"I've nothing more to tell, except that we are not unnaturally anxious to keep the beggar out of the family. You see Bella—"

"Is that your sister's name? It's a very pretty one."

"Yes—I rather like it. Well, she's very romantic; she has been allowed the run of all the novels in the library, and her head's full of sentimental nonsense. You can pitch it strong on that line, for you read a good deal of that sort of rubbish."

"He calls the literature of his country rubbish!"

"That part of it, at all events. Why,

hang it, you never met with a novelist in your life who could write a correct account of a trial, and yet they pretend to powers of observation."

"You're rather hard on them, Phil. A chap couldn't become a judge or a barrister even by mere force of observation.

"Don't argue with me, sir, for that is a science *I* know something about, and I could knock *your* head off at that in a few seconds. Experience makes a man a judge or a barrister, and experience is the result of observation. Shut up!"

"With alacrity. I never attempt to chop logic with you."

They had reached the top of a hill whence they had a good view of Bremning Minor.

"There's the house, old boy," said Philip, "and that low roof beyond is the person-

h is a fine specimen of early

spot."

u; you'll say so when you
village. It is one of the
e in the county. The gover-
reat pride in it—keeps the
s neat, and all that sort of

s are lucky in having so liberal

Well, I don't know. You
reat eye for the picturesque,
peasantry the country's pride
hen a little dilapidated and
old ruin, the governor doesn't
h too much prosperity—in fact,
he villagers remarkably pictur-
like scarecrows."

id I shan't appreciate the beauty,

Phil; I'm so used to it in Ireland. But then, of course, there's no sort of clanship or loyalty over here as there is with us. The landlord there is often a sort of foster-brother to his whole tenantry, and if the poor beggars go ragged and wretched it's because he can't help them, for he never gets any rent."

"Oh, I know that lamentable disorganization of the law of landlord and tenant; but it's wearing out very fast, thank goodness."

By this time they were entering the village. Though clad in autumn tints, it was looking very lovely, and there was a good deal of greenery about, for the old squire was wise enough to plant evergreens at all available points, so that even in winter there was some leafage to be seen.

"Egad! it *is* a pretty village, Phil!"

"Yes, the old boy has spared no money on it—spends a good deal more than I should. When it comes to me I shall let it go down a bit. I don't care much for the country, and shouldn't waste on hedges the tin that would keep one comfortably in London. But here we are, at the house."

They drove up the gravel sweep to the front door. Bella was at the library window. Marcus took off his hat.

"What a handsome, gentlemanly man!" thought she, "and what a graceful bow! I should have guessed he was a peer from his noble bearing, like the Viscount of Valluce in *Gold and Guilt.* I wonder how old he is!"

"By the way, Marcus," said Philip as they pulled up, "I forgot to tell you that this silly girl has got the notion out of some high-flown novel that two men cannot be

friends as we are without entering into a compact signed with blood to marry each other's nearest female relatives."

"My nearest female relative is my grandmother."

"Then don't tell her so; let her believe you have a sister."

"I don't mind—anything you like."

"All right—but, mum! here she comes. Bella, my dear, this is my very dear friend and companion, the Honourable Marcus Lysaght. Marcus, my sister, Miss Bella Charlwood. There now, that's over. And now, Bella, have you got any luncheon for him, for he must be starved?"

Bella expressed a belief that luncheon was laid in the breakfast-room, if they would step that way. So they proceeded to that pleasant apartment, looking out into the park. There they found the squire de-

canting some choice Madeira in honour of the new guest.

"This is my father, Marcus. Governor, this is my chum Marcus."

"Very delighted to make your acquaintance, sir—very delighted. My son has often promised to prevail on you to come down and have a little sport, and I am very glad you have come at last. It's a capital season for birds. I saw Meaker, my keeper, this morning, and he promises plenty of coveys. Take a seat—here on my right, sir. Now what can I offer you?"

In this way the squire pressed his hospitality on his son's friend, for he was really delighted to see the man who was to clear up all difficulties and confer distinction on the family by marrying Bella.

Marcus little suspected the trap his bosom friend was laying for him.

CHAPTER XIII.

PRUE AGAINST ODDS.

IT was not until the third day after his arrival, when he had already made considerable progress in Bella's favour, that Marcus Lysaght was met by Mrs. James Harding. Bella had been showing him some of the prettiest views in the immediate neighbourhood, for, by some strange fatality, Philip was always being wanted by the Squire in the study. He had to be always apologising to his friend, and handing him over for Bella to amuse. Meanwhile the partridges—the declared reason for Marcus's visit—had a fine time of it, for in spite of

repeated hints from Meaker, Philip and Marcus and the Squire never once shouldered barrel for the whole of the first week.

The country is undoubtedly a "deuce of a place"—to borrow a phrase from Marcus—for young people to fall in love with one another in. They can moon about town, and stare into shop-windows to admire the odds and ends displayed there, without thinking much of one another. But in the country it is quite impossible to be unconscious of a lovely creature tripping over the greensward at your side. You cannot be utterly oblivious of a neat little ankle that you get a glimpse of at the stile. Oh, those stiles! they certainly were invented by Cupid for the special purpose of match-making. There is such squeezing of hands and leaning on shoulders—such displays of manly regard and female timidity, ending very often in a

shriek, a slip, and the landing of the giddy young thing upon the susceptible bosom of her natural protector.

Bella, when she was by herself, could manage to get over the stile, if not with grace, at least with ease and activity; but I suppose the presence of Marcus made her nervous, for she certainly required a great amount of support, encouragement, and assistance.

She had met once or twice in her course of novel-reading with declarations and other love-business being transacted at stiles. Claude declared his passion to Arabella (in *The Plighted Hearts*), Julia reproached Edward with his attentions to Clara (in *The Woman of no Heart*), Sir Charles renounced Emilia for ever (in *Rank and Ruin*), and Lady Deverall told her passion to Louis (in *Choosing Beneath Her*) at a stile! In fact, if we may believe novel-writers, the whole

of existence turns on a stile; but, to be sure, this sort of stile is often the only one of which they are possessed, so they may well make the most of it.

There was one stile in Bremning Minor that was really an awkward stile. It was called locally Elemen Gate, not with any reference to earth, air, fire, or water, but because it was made of elm. And a very crabbed elm it must have been—an elm intended for the coffins of misers and other eccentric characters—to have supplied such gnarled, crooked, and cantankerous small timbers as formed the Elemen Gate.

These timbers took each its own way; each struck out a line, and a very crooked one, for itself. The top bar had a downward bend in the middle, but the second had a lateral bulge that quite took away all the advantage of the top one, and then the

bottom one had a corkscrewy turn of mind, and was rather unstable in its fixing, so that if you relied on it, it generally gave way when you least expected.

It was over the Elemen Gate that Marcus was assisting Bella when Prue first became aware of his presence in the village.

It was a lovely autumn day, and Prue had brought little Prue out in a perambulator. She and James had been over to the extreme limit of the parish to see a sick person, and as they returned he had called in to speak to Betty Tanner about her grandson's non-attendance at the Sunday-school. As baby objected violently to be taken into the cottages, and Prue was not over-anxious to introduce her to an atmosphere which is not always the most wholesome, it was agreed that mother and child should wait outside.

So baby, having been supplied with a handful of daisies, was affecting to be deeply delighted with their perfume, and Prue was sitting on her shawl spread on the grass beside the perambulator, when the sound of voices on the further side of the hedge became audible.

Prue looked up, and saw a young and rather good-looking man vault lightly over the stile, and turn round to assist his companion. That companion proved to be Bella.

"Oh, what a horrid stile it is! I shall slip—oh dear!"

"Pray lean on me. I'll support you."

"Oh, please go on, and I'll get over by myself." But she didn't leave go of his hand.

"Not on any account. You might sprain your ankle. It is a most dangerous stile. There now, give me both hands."

"Oh, I'm so nervous. Oh dear! I shall fall!"

"Lean on me—don't be afraid."

"Ah oh! Oh, I shall fall!"

And fall she did. She had just reached the topmost bar, and therefore fell straight into Marcus's arms, who caught her easily, and with a satisfied and happy air, as if he wished that life consisted entirely of assisting Bella over Elemen Gate.

But it so happened that, falling somewhat sideways into her companion's arms, and with her head over his shoulder, Bella was so placed that her eyes met those of Prue. Immediately she turned as red as fire, and, extricating herself, with a little shriek she sank back on the stile.

"My dearest girl," said Marcus with great *empressement*, "I fear you have hurt yourself! Pray tell me."

"Oh no, dear—I mean Mr. Lysaght—I was only a little startled."

"Oh," thought our Prudence, "they have begun to call each other 'dear' already"—and Prue felt a sharp pang by sympathy for poor absent Ted.

"Take care, there's some one there," whispered Bella hastily.

Marcus turned. Bella came forward and held out her hand to Prue.

"Oh, dear Mrs. Harding, I am so pleased to see you! I've been such a naughty girl not to run over and see you. But you know we have a visitor—let me introduce you. Mrs. Harding—the Honourable Marcus Lysaght. A great friend of my brother's, my dear Mrs. Harding."

"Delighted to make Mr. Lysaght's acquaintance, I am sure," said Prue, but the tone did not harmonise with the words.

"Have you heard from Edward, Bella?" she continued. Even Prue couldn't under the circumstances resist that very feminine shot.

Bella winced and blushed.

"Oh dear, no! I don't expect to hear now. People so soon forget promises to write."

"Or promises of any sort," said Prue bitterly.

"Surely Mrs. Harding, as a married woman and mistress of a house, knows what brittle material pie-crust is," said Marcus, coming to Bella's rescue. He saw she was in a difficulty, though he couldn't quite see what it was.

"It is not a good thing to build your hopes on," said Prue.

"And a very bad thing for the digestion," said Marcus.

"What a horrid impudent puppy!" thought the lady.

"What a cantankerous little woman!" mused the gentleman.

Poor Bella was very uncomfortable in the meantime. She was terribly afraid Prue would say something that would reveal to Marcus that she was engaged, and she was anything but anxious to have that fact revealed, for he was very attentive and agreeable.

"How is dear Mr. Harding?" she asked, in hopes of turning the conversation into a new channel.

"Do you mean Edward or my husband?" said the provoking Prue.

"Oh, your husband, of course," was the petulent answer. "I don't suppose Mr. Edward Harding troubles himself to write to anybody."

"Well, if he does not write to a certain person, Bella dear, I suppose no one else

has a right to expect to hear from him."

Bella did not choose to hear this.

"Here is Mr. Harding, I do declare!" she said, going to meet James. "How are you, dear Mr. Harding? Oh, that was such a beautiful sermon last Sunday! and please do, pray, tell me how is that dear old Betty Tanner; and when may I come and teach in the Sunday School, and won't you have decorations of evergreens at Christmas, and if so, mayn't I do the chancel all myself?"

In this way, by asking about twenty questions, Bella hoped to keep James off the theme of his brother, and she was right. James saw there was a stranger present, so he spared her blushes and did not inquire whether she had heard from Edward. Then, like a good husband and father, he wheeled Prue the second down the field to the gate, and took the perambulator through

it, while the others made the short cut by the stile.

I suppose Bella did not care to continue her walk with Marcus, for fear, perhaps, of asking too many questions. So she suggested to him that they should walk back with Mr. and Mrs. Harding and that "dear darling duck of a baby."

"Allow me to help you over the stile," said Marcus politely to Mrs. Harding.

"Oh, dear no, thank you, I wouldn't trouble you. I'm not a native of the place, you know, Mr. Lysaght, but I have to go about a good deal alone, and if I could not climb stiles should have my walks sadly restricted."

This was meant for a quiet thrust at Bella, but that young lady affected not to hear it, and paid great attention to baby.

"Have you been in this part of the world

before, Mr. Lysaght?" asked James when Bella introduced him to her companion.

"No; this is my first visit," was the answer. "I came down on the 14th."

Reflection by Prudence:—"You are on pretty good terms with Bella, then, considering how short the acquaintance is."

"It's a pretty village, don't you think so? And the surrounding land is very good. By the way, do you shoot?" said James.

"Oh yes! I'm an ardent sportsman—in fact, it was to have a blaze at the birds that Philip asked me to come down."

"What sport have you had?"

"Well, to tell the truth, we haven't been out yet. Philip has been engaged almost every day on business with his father, and so our excursion has been put off."

Reflection by Prudence:—"You are an ardent sportsman, and came down for the

shooting, but you have been here a week and have not fired a gun!"

In this way they wandered homeward across the field. As they reached the gate which opened on the main road, Philip rode up. He stopped and took off his hat politely

Marcus had prevailed on Bella, who, for reasons of her own, was pretending to be tired, to take his arm. Philip, seeing this, could not resist a quiet smile of satisfaction, and just as it was dying away his eyes met those of Prue. She had seen and interpreted the smile, and he knew it. They look-at one another defiantly—it was a declaration of war.

"James," said Prue to her husband when they reached home, "that Philip Charlwood has brought down that friend of his on purpose that he may pay attention to Bella."

"And try to cut out Ted, eh? Well, my best of little women, if she can't be true to him in spite of absence and the attention of an Honourable, it is better that he should be undeceived at once."

"Oh, don't talk in that matter-of-fact, business sort of way, James. It would break Edward's heart."

James had his own private opinion as to the frangibility of that organ, but he didn't say anything.

"What a mean, cunning creature Philip Charlwood is! Do you know, James, I think I shall hate lawyers."

"Well, Prue, I should advise you to have nothing to do with them professionally, but I have met with very nice and really good men who followed the law."

"Oh, I hate lawyers—there!"

What a strange commotion this was for a

temper usually so gentle and quiet as Prue's! James was a little astonished. The truth was, Prudence felt that if Bella proved false to Ted it would imply that she, Prudence, had not been worthy of the trust Edward had confided to her. It was very odd, she thought, that neither Bella nor they had heard from Ted since the day of his sailing.

She even worked herself into a belief, so romantic as to be worthy of Bella herself, that the squire intercepted Edward's letters at the post-office. Indeed, when she came to think of it, the postman had obtained the situation through Mr. Charlwood's influence.

But she was laughed out of the idea by James as soon as she suggested it to him.

However, Prue made up her mind to fight Ted's battle stoutly. Hitherto she had kept aloof, but now she insisted on James's going up to the Manor-house with her, and

calling on Mr. Lysaght. And she was perpetually dropping in to see Bella, and staying an unconscionable time. Bella soon learnt the motive of this, and Philip was quite shrewd enough to see it. He told his father, who made himself as disagreeable as he possibly could to Prue, but she was not to be routed.

It was terrible work for the sensitive little woman to thrust herself on people who so clearly wished her away. Bella's coldness, Philip's sneers, and the rudeness of old Charlwood were bitter things to suffer, but she bore them meekly, pretending not to perceive them.

James was at first at a loss to understand the sudden charm which the Manor-house had for Prue. When she told him why she went, and described the martyrdom she suffered, he was still more surprised.

"But, my dear Prue, why struggle against fate? She is a worthless, heartless girl, and even if you succeeded in dislodging this pretender, the next man who paid her attention would win her heart as easily. Better surrender."

"My dear James, I am like the Old Guard. I die, but never surrender."

"Your position is not worth the loss of life, Prue, to carry out yonr military simile. How pugnacious she has become all of a sudden!"

"I can't help its being worthless. It is my duty to defend it, and I will too!"

"Better retire in good order, with your face to the enemy. It would be wiser."

"Sir, wisdom has nothing to do with it. Wisdom is a noble assistant where one is in doubt and difficulty. I have a duty to perform, and wisdom can only tell me what I

know already. Duty before everything!"

"Then you refuse to surrender? The odds are heavily against you. There is heavy cavalry, say, represented by Lysaght; infantry, that's the silly child herself; skirmishers, Philip Charlwood, with a very galling fire; and the Squire himself as heavy artillery."

"Surrender?" said Prue, snatching up a paper-knife from the study table, and flourishing it as if it were a sword. "Surrender? Never. Up guards, and at them! There, don't you think I have a fine martial spirit?"

"Marvellous! It is a pity it should be lost. I ought to have been a lieutenant-general evidently instead of a hum-drum parson."

"You're a dear old goose, and I'm a very riotous young person," said Prue, kissing

him fondly on the forehead; "but seriously, James dear, I cannot give up Edward's trust without a hard struggle."

And she did not. Day after day she faced the enemy, and bore all their attacks unflinchingly. It was bitter work, for often the tears were nearly forcing their way. And she felt her self-respect wounded, too, for she had to force her way into the house almost. The servants would say Bella was out—that everybody was out, and Prue would answer, "Oh, it didn't matter, she'd call again, or she'd take a stroll in the garden and wait!" and she would wander round the house because she knew she would come upon them in some of the rooms, which all had windows opening on the lawn.

What plagued Philip most was the watch that Prue kept to prevent Marcus and Bella from making solitary and sentimental ram-

bles. As sure as the young people made the attempt, Prue used to appear in some strange way, and offer to go for a stroll with them.

In vain did Philip and Marcus start off early in the morning for some shooting, having made arrangements to lunch at a certain covert, where Bella was to join them at noon. In vain did Bella steal out of the house as if she were trying to escape the vigilant eye of the police. Prudence seemed ubiquitous.

I believe that even Martha Ogleby was once stimulated to wonder for about three seconds and a half "what had come to missus to take her out of doors so frequent."

"Hang it all!" said Philip, worn out with this long game of cross-purposes; "hang it all! this is downright persecution. I must see what we can do to stop this. We must

try and offend them. I'll go and tell Harding that the governor refuses to let him have that two hundred per annum. Perhaps he'll cut up rough at that, and then we shall get rid of them."

But in reality poor Prue's hard fight did not damage Philip's plans, since Marcus, out of sheer opposition, began to press his suit upon Bella more ardently than he had first intended.

She was pretty, he felt, and she was likely to be well off, and what did he want more? She would do him credit by her appearance, and would have money enough to pay her own milliner's bills. It did not occur to him that anything further was needed to constitute matrimonial happiness.

As for Bella, she had wished to carry on a flirtation with Marcus, and then at the end, when he declared himself, intended to say

that she was engaged, that she pitied him and wished him to forgive her folly—which was the course adopted by Bianca in *A Lover's Revenge*. But Marcus was a fascinating fellow, and he was a nobleman, and he made love so romantically, that Bella became desperately in love with him, and persuaded herself that Edward's silence was a sufficient justification.

And now the visit of Philip and Marcus was drawing to a close, and all parties knew that some decisive steps must be taken before long. And each prepared for the struggle.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE SIEGE OF UNGAWALLAH.

THE discovery which Tom Martindale made, that the mutineers were busy driving a mine under the fort, was not a thing to go to sleep upon. He lost not a moment in alarming the little garrison, and called a council of war on the spot where he had made the discovery. There was no time to waste in long debate; the mutineers were at work below, and they had large supplies of powder; at any minute they might blow the fort into the air, and bury its defenders among its ruins.

Bold as the little force was, there were

unmistakable signs of dismay on all countenances. The mutineers had discoveted their weak point, and, having once driven a mine, might, even if beaten out of that, drive others until they succeeded by mere force of numbers.

It was determined to countermine immediately. As many as could be spared from sentry duty were told off for the work, and, were divided into two parties, so as to relieve each other, and keep up the driving of the countermine day and night. They soon found that the Sepoys were taking things easy, only working for a few hours in the day, and then not doing it with a will, whereas the little garrison toiled for dear life. As they began to get close to the Sepoys they were obliged to work carefully, knocking off when the others were driving, and only pushing on at night. It was evident the Sepoys were not working

entirely at haphazard, for they were driving their mine to the very centre of the fort. It was supposed that they believed the basement of the building was unoccupied, not calculating on its having been alloted to the ladies, because, though unpleasant, it was at least safe. Sometimes the noise of the spades and pickaxes was plainly audible, and sorely terrified the poor women, who thought the Sepoys would burst up through the floor every minute.

At last the besieged and the besiegers were but about a pickaxe length apart in their galleries. Early one evening, as soon as the Sepoys had retired from their workings, the Englishmen broke down the slight barrier between the mines, and explored the enemy's ground. They found some of the powder already stored. They had not done their work a day too soon!

The powder was immediately removed to the fort. Then a small party set to work to build a solid earthwork across the tunnel beyond the junction of the two mines. It was pierced for muskets, so that the enemy could be held at bay effectually.

Before, however, the earthwork was quite completed, the engineer called Tom Martindale on one side, and proposed that they should explore the mine to its mouth. Tom at once assented, and, giving directions to the others what to do in case they came back pursued by the enemy, they took their drawn sword and revolvers, and crawled away into the darkness.

The Sepoys kept little watch and ward. They were apparently so secure of the little garrison that they neglected the most common precautions necessary in the face of an enemy, or else they were not sufficiently in

awe of the commanders of their own choosing to be very perfect in discipline.

There was not even a sentry at the mouth of the mine. As Tom and the engineer crawled to the edge of the hollow in which it was excavated, all was quiet—it was a perfectly still, starlight night. Behind them rose the fort; in front was a ridge of ground, on which stood the powder-waggons that had been seized by the mutineers; beyond that was the camp. The spot had been well selected, for a clump of trees and a ruined bungalow effectually concealed the working from the fort.

As they stood at the entrance of the mine, Tom and his companion seemed like escaped prisoners. It was so like freedom to breathe fresh air beyond the walls of the fort.

"I say, Martindale," said the engineer at last, "look at those powder-wag-

gons! I wish we had got them here!"

"I'm afraid it can't be done," said Tom, calculating chances.

"No," said the other; but added, after a moment, "We might blow 'em up, though."

"By Jove, that's a good idea! Have you any powder?"

"No, but we can fetch some."

"We mustn't both leave this; you go back and bring up some fellows with a couple of bags and then we'll do it. I'll wait and mount guard."

Back hurried the engineer with all speed, leaving Tom to his lonely watch. But it was not long, if it was lonely. The engineer and two others speedily emerged from the mine with a bag of powder apiece.

Tom insisted on performing the dangerous task; he knew the ground well, for his own

quarters had been close by. So he was allowed to go, the others envying him the glory, but giving place to him in order to insure more certainly the success of a scheme that would be so useful to the besieged.

Tom tied the powder-bags round his waist; he only took two with him, and in one of these he cut a little slit with his sword.

"It will make a train as I go," he whispered to the engineer, "so if I'm caught at the waggon, and cut down, or seized, you'll be able to light it. Never mind me, for I'd as lief be blown up as hacked in pieces by those devils. Good-bye."

"Good-bye!"

They all shook him by the hand and said good-bye, for it was indeed a desperate venture.

Crouching down, he crawled away on

hands and knees, and was soon lost in the gloom.

What an age it seemed to the watchers, and how loud their hearts seemed to beat, as they strained their eyes towards the ridge where the waggons stood! So acute was their hearing rendered, that they trembled now and then as a twig snapped or a bough rustled where the young soldier was stealing along.

At last the engineer gave a long sigh of relief, and the others, following the direction of his eyes, saw Tom's head and shoulders showing above the crest. But he disappeared again almost immediately, and to their horror a dark figure rose from the other side of the ridge, and came apparently to the very spot where Tom was concealed. It began to descend the hill, and then they saw Tom spring up behind it, and then there

was the flash of his sword, and a dull crash in the brushwood. They saw Tom bend over the fallen man a moment, and then, rising, steal forward towards the waggons. They saw as he stood out clear against the sky that he had taken a cloak or blanket and a turban from his victim.

In a few moments he was back among them, safe! He told them that, as he was making his way up the slope, he heard some one approaching in the other direction. He peeped over and reconnoitred, and saw a non-commissioned officer approaching. It at once occurred to him that he might be going on his rounds alone, and would possibly visit the mine. "I didn't like it altogether, but I felt I must drop him as quietly as I could, so I slipped on one side and cut him down as he passed. It was a good thing there wasn't much noise, for when I

got to the waggons I saw three or four fellows asleep—supposed to be guarding the powder, I imagine. But I had slipped on the man's cloak and head-gear, so I wasn't afraid. And now where's the other powder-bag? We'll blow in the mouth of the mine, and so spoil their work as soon as we have sent the waggons into the sky."

The powder-bag was carried into the mine, and then Tom, stooping over the train, struck a spark with flint and steel. A little spirt of flame followed—prtt, prtt, fizz! It ran along the ground in a little thread of flame—here and there very slender where only a few grains had fallen, but where Tom had delayed or turned about much, shooting up in a vivid sheet. But the whole train had gone off in half the time it takes to write this, and then there came a sudden rush of dull flame into the air, followed by half-a-

dozen reports, as by twos and threes the waggons exploded, and a great fiery cloud of smoke spread over the ridge where the waggons had lately stood.

Tom didn't wait outside to admire the phenomenon. As soon as the train was alight he laid the other in the mine. When the great explosion came, they just took a hurried glance to satisfy themselves, and retreated along the gallery.

But in a short time the whole rebel camp was in commotion. Orders and counter-orders, shouts of alarm, and cries of rage were heard on all sides, and no one could quite learn the extent of the damage, while none could guess its cause.

Of the men who had been placed to guard the waggons only a few blackened and scorched fragments were found. But a further search led the mutineers to the body of the

non-commissioned officer, which, lying out of the direct line of the explosion, below the brow of the ridge, was undisfigured, except by an ugly sword-cut, which divided the organs of benevolence, veneration, and firmness.

At the sight of this it was conjectured either that the besieged had made a sortie, or that some reinforcement had arrived.

But the mystery did not remain long unsolved. While the mutineers were discussing the question, there came a low, heavy, rumbling sound that seemed to shake the earth; immediately a great upheaving of the ground took place between the fort and the mouth of the mine, a great puff of smoke and flame followed, and then the ground fell in. And so the labour of some weeks was thrown away for the mutineers, who besides lost several men and a great stock of powder.

"Martindale," said the engineer as they emerged from the counter-mine, "you deserve the Victoria Cross for that."

"And don't I wish I may get it!" said Tom, as he flung himself down on his rough couch and fell into a refreshing sleep—he had hardly closed his eyes for three days and nights.

There was great joy in the little garrison over the doings of this eventful night. But the wiser ones felt that this was only a respite. The enemy would return to the attack with greater vigour, and would be all the more savage for the repulse. Then the thought came that Ungawallah was out of the ordinary routes of European troops in marching from one great station to another, and that therefore there was little chance of a relief.

Things was still very gloomy for the gal-

lant little garrison. As some of the old hands predicted, the enemy came on in force next day, and attempted to carry the fort by storm. Once they succeeded in planting their ladders at one part of the wall, while an attack was made on another with such impetuosity that the whole of the little garrison assembled to repel it.

Luckily the first mutineer who scaled the ladder was shot down the moment he set foot on the wall, and in another minute the ladder was flung down into the moat.

All behaved admirably in the fort. The ladies were untiring in loading, and civilians as well as soldiers fought like veterans. The guns from Kholaghur did noble work, and the slugs, which had once been Mrs. Major O'Mahony's albata spoons, were delivered by the old gun over the gate with telling effect.

There were only two or three slight casualties in the garrison, but the slaughter of Sepoys was considerable. Towards noon they retired to their lines, carrying off their killed and wounded. And the attack was not begun again that day, which was a great relief to the little garrison, worn out with watching, with working, and with fighting.

It so chanced that on the afternoon of this very day, as the 203rd Berkshire Rifles were camping, a native made his appearance and demanded an interview with the commanding officer. It was rather lucky for that native that the men had had a long hot march and were tired; for the stories of cruelty, and indeed the traces of it they had met with, had made them ferocious, and to see a native and to shoot at him were almost simultaneous occurrences. No doubt the innocent occasionally suffered with the

guilty, but there was some excuse for our fellows. It was lucky, therefore, for this native that he turned up when the men were asleep or lying down, and when the sentry to whom he surrendered happened to be in a merciful mood from sheer weariness. And if it was lucky for the native it was lucky for others too, for he had come to inform the colonel that an English garrison was besieged by a largely superior force of Sepoys at Ungawallah, a town about fifteen miles westward along the river.

This information was at first received with doubt. It was believed that it was a *ruse* to delay the regiment on its march to Lucknow, but the native produced a scrap of paper, on which was written—"This man is loyal to the British cause. He has saved myself and three others, concealing us in his village at the risk of his own life.—GEORGE

McIntosh." The colonel had heard of the escape of Mr. McIntosh, another civilian, and two officers, and of its being effected by a native. He therefore asked the man a few questions which satisfied him of his identity, and then called his officers together and told them of the information he had received.

The native begged of them to lose no time, as the rebels were mining the place and intended to blow it up.

The colonel immediately broke up the encampment, told his men of the imminent peril of their countrymen and country-women at Ungawallah, and marched at once on the fort.

Edward Harding questioned the native about the troops at Ungawallah and how he had learnt their position, and the man was very communicative. At last Edward

found that he had come up the river in a boat which was moored a little way down stream. The native told him he should take to the boat as soon as they reached it, for the river was a rapid one, and with a fair wind he should outstrip the regiment, and might, perhaps, find some means of conveying intelligence of the coming succours to the besieged garrison.

As soon as Edward learnt this he exerted his utmost eloquence to prevail on the colonel to let him go on and announce the approach of the regiment. The colonel objected strongly at first, but eventually gave in. And then Ted had to do his work over again, for the native declined to take him—it would be sacrificing both their lives. At last, however, as it would be dark when they got to Ungawallah, and as Ted promised to lie under a heap of leaves and nets

in the bottom of the boat, he was allowed to embark, and before long was skimming the turbid yellow waters of the river, half smothered by the unsavoury nets and other redolent odds and ends in which he was buried.

At last, just after dark, the native ran his boat ashore on a small islet, on which he landed, leaving Ted in the boat for a while. When he returned, he brought with him three or four large gourds. Placing these in the bottom of the boat, he drew a knife, and then, selecting the largest, made a sort of helmet of it. While engaged in doing this he threw the other gourds over at intervals.

Finally, when the helmet was complete, he told Ted, who had been lying in the bottom of the boat watching him with great interest, to put on the gourd, jump over-

board, and drop quietly down stream in the wake of the boat. The other gourds had been thrown in by the crafty fellow to disarm suspicion.

Ted did not feel very anxious for a bath in that cold and uninviting fluid, but there was no choice for it, so over he went. A rope flung over the stern helped him along, and by-and-by a turn of the stream brought them under the fort of Ungawallah. Here the native signed to Ted to swim ashore.

"The sentry will come round soon," he whispered, bending over the stern, "and you must shout to him, and they'll let down the rope. But you must be very careful. The Sepoys have boats below."

Ted swam ashore, and hiding himself among the rough stones at the foot of the rock, kept a keen eye on the fort, watching for the sentry. It was late and dusk, and

Ted felt the cold after his bath. He waited for a long time, but no sentry passed on the rampart above.

"Had the native been deceiving him?" he wondered. But the truth was, after their hard day's fighting the little garrison were resting, and this side of the fort, which was supposed to be inaccessible, was less carefully guarded than usual.

At last Ted's patience gave way. It was too dark for any one to see him from the opposite shore, and he could spy a light at a window in the lower part of the fort. He would try to scale the rock.

It was dangerous and difficult work at first, for he was stiff and numbed with cold. But he struggled on, and crawled up foot by foot. The darkness was rather in his favour, for it prevented his seeing the terrors of the ascent. So still he toiled up—now resting

for a while, with extended arms grasping some wide boss of stone—now crawling on all-fours along a narrow ledge—now hanging from some projecting spur. By the time he had got half way up to the window, he was almost inclined to wish he had stayed below. But it was as far to go back as to go on now, and more dangerous, so he persevered.

His clothes were almost torn off his back, his hands were bleeding, and his feet were cut (he had flung off his boots before he jumped into the river), and every limb was weary and bruised. But at length he managed to get his hands on the sill of the little window and drew himself up.

"By Jove!" was his exclamation on looking in. It was heard by those inside, and apparently was mistaken for some hostile sound, for the next thing Ted had to say

was, "Don't fire, Tom; it's I, Edward Harding."

Tom could hardly believe his ears, but he sprang to the window, flung it open, and half helped, half dragged his friend in.

"Where on earth do you drop from, Ted?" was all he could find power to say.

"I haven't dropped from anywhere. I climbed up from below. And the 203rd is marching down to your relief, and will be here before daybreak!"

"Hurrah!" shouted Tom—"hurrah!" and he rushed out and shouted "Hurrah!" so vigorously that everybody came hurrying to learn what was the matter; and when they heard they shouted "Hurrah!" too. The besiegers knew what "Hurrah!" meant well enough, but couldn't for the life of them make out what the garrison could have to rejoice about.

And all this time the gallant 203rd was pushing on to Ungawallah for life and death!"

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.

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10